Dentist, nephew rescued from kidnappers in Sulu

Story on Page A17

7 spies, 2 diplomats, 2 GIs killed in Iraq

BAGHDAD—Guerrillas killed two US soldiers and wounded a third in an ambush in western Iraq, a military statement said on Sunday. A day earlier, seven Spanish intelligence agents and two Japanese diplomats died in separate attacks near Baghdad.

With the latest deaths, guerrillas have killed 106 coalition troops in Iraq in

(SPREAD A9)

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

WHAT'S INSIDE

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BSP chief blamed for peso fall

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

IT'S Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura—not popular actor Fernando Poe Jr.—who is to blame for the peso's rapid fall, according to Jose L. Cuisia Jr. who headed the central bank in the early 1990s.

Buenaventura, however, rebutted Cuisia's allegations, saying many peso speculators have been penalized. He added that Cuisia "should stick to selling insurance."

Cuisia, chair of Philippine American Life Insurance Co. (Philamlife), yesterday told the Inquirer that the peso dropped to record lows because Buenaventura had refused to crack down on speculators.

"Why is he [Buenaventura] saying that the BSP will go after speculators only now? He doesn't even have to say it ... He must go after them all the time and really hit them the only way that they would understand—through their pockets," Cuisia said.

Cuisia said Buenaventura had all the tools at his disposal to make it harder for speculators to attack the peso amid rising political and economic uncertainties.

"He can send a message that the BSP would not tolerate any speculative attack on the peso by raising the cost of attacking the peso. But since the speculators are making so much money, the peso will continue to be vulnerable," Cuisia said.

"No bank or trader has been made to pay stiff penalties for attacks on the peso" despite Buenaventura's warnings he would

(SEE A11)

Roco: Let's change this administration

Ex-senator Alyansa ng Pag-asa presidential bet

FORMER Sen. Raul Roco delivers his fighting words after he was proclaimed a presidential candidate by his followers during a convention at the Folk Arts Theater

AT THE OFFICIAL launching of his quest for the presidency, former Sen. Raul Roco yesterday fired a broadside at his rivals, targeting first President Macapagal-Arroyo whose administration he said "is not up to the task and should be changed."

Roco, who once served as education secretary under Ms Macapagal, accused the President of being too preoccupied with politicking, noting that she used the visits of boxing champion Manny Pacquiao and singer Mandy Moore to gain media mileage.

"But let's not replace it (administration) with one that's not prepared," Roco said in his speech, obviously referring to actor Fernando Poe Jr., a presidential aspirant who has no experience in public office.

Before a crowd of some 10,000 supporters at the Folk Arts Theater in Pasay City, Roco proclaimed his readiness to lead the country.

"We need a decent leadership that is competent," said Roco, a consistent front-runner in surveys of presidential aspirants.

He told business leaders on the eve of his announcement that if chosen to lead one of Asia's most vibrant democracies, he would outperform Singapore statesman Lee Kuan Yew and just-retired Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, both highly credited with modernizing their economies.

"Ten years from now, they (Singaporeans and Malaysians) will all say how we wish we had a Raul Roco in Malaysia and Singapore."

(ROCO'S A2)

HE'S TRUE-BLUE PINOY–SOTTO

Lakas exec questions FPJ citizenship

By Gil Cabacungan Jr. and Christine O. Avendaño

IS "Dancho" an American citizen, and a tax evader at that? The ruling Lakas-CMD party wants to know.

In an interview with RMN radio, Lakas spokesperson Heherson Alvarez urged presidential aspirant Fernando Poe Jr. to name others on issues concerning his citizenship and his tax remittances as an actor-producer.

But the action star, most famous for his "Ang Panday" movies, is a true-blue Filipino and a "national hero," Senate Minority Leader Vicente Sotto III countered.

"Obviously Poe running for president has sparked fear in the hearts and minds of some people," Sotto, a member of the LDP and a Poe supporter, told the Inquirer.

Alvarez said it should be easy for Poe to prove his citizenship based on his past transactions that would show whether he had represented himself as a Filipino or an American.

Poe is the son of a Filipino father and an American mother, and there are reports that he was born in the United States.

Alvarez said Poe's citizenship was a critical issue, considering that the Constitution specifies that only natural-born Filipinos can be president.

He said that equally important were Poe's tax payment records with the Bureau of Internal Revenue. "As the president, you should lead by example by following the country's laws, specifically the payment of the right taxes. Tax evasion is a black mark on a person's integrity," he said.

Alvarez said it was up to Poe and not Lakas-CMD to refute the questions regarding his citizenship and taxes.

But Sotto said Poe was a "national hero" of sorts because he opted to be a Filipino citizen while his four siblings chose to be American citizens.

"So you can see he is a man with a sense of nationalism ... because at 25, he could have elected to become an American citizen but he did not," the opposition senator said.

Poe's no-show at the 29th Philippine Business Conference on Saturday has added to the doubts about the seriousness of his presidential bid.

"His no-show makes one wonder if he is truly serious or if he has entered the political arena half-heartedly," administration Sen. Panfilo Pangilinan said yesterday.

(ANGAS / A6)

Poe bid likely to self-destruct

By Amando Doronila

THE PRESIDENTIAL bid of actor Fernando Poe Jr. is showing signs of imploding, just days after he announced his candidacy for the 2004 elections on Wednesday.

Poe made the announcement amid the most

ANALYSIS

inauspicious circumstances. He did it unilaterally and without

editorial opposition blessings.

The main opposition party, the Lakas ng Demokratikong Pilipino (LDP), is still locked in the process of selecting the standard-bearer of the "united" opposition and has not yet completed its "road show" that was intended to crystallize the sentiments of its rank and file.

Showing disrespect for and impatience over the process, the politically inexperi-

(COLUMN A-19)

A PATIENT, who is participating in a control group experiment on AIDS treatment, walks to his quarters at the Erasmus Wellness Center in Pililla, Rizal.

Persons with AIDS find haven, hope

By Marlon Ramos
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

PILILLA, Rizal—If stories of kind-hearted people saving stray animals and treating them as their own amaze you, meet till you meet retired pilot Virgilio Erasmus and his wife, Teresa.

For five years now, the couple have been taking care of people afflicted with the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) in their home in Parañaque City and their farm in this Rizal town. Childless, the Erasmus said they have been "treating the AIDS patients like our own children."

To accommodate his "growing family," Erasmus decided to develop and turn their supposed-to-be retirement place in Barangay Halayhayin here into a haven for AIDS patients. The Erasmus Wellness Center is now home to four patients with full-blown AIDS who are undergoing "rehabilitation" without paying a single cent.

Erasmus's involvement with AIDS victims happened serendipitously.

In October 1998, while he was trying to convince officials of the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM) to allow AIDS patients to try his mania tea concoction, he came across Rey, an HIV patient.

"Nung first told me that he had

(ERASMUS / A2)

Project puts cops out of extort's way

By Christian V. Esguerra

THRU of policemen doing the rounds in your neighborhood for cash and goodies during Christmas?

To keep police officers from spoiling the season's festive spirit, the Philippine National Police has unveiled the practice beginning this year.

But on Saturday, PNP chief Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. gave his men an alterna-

(PROJECT / A20)

A1
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
MONDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2003
WEATHER FORECAST
Second FRONTPAGE

Militants threaten action vs ID

By Alcuin Papa, Christine Avendaño, Carlito Pablo and Dalila T. Mallari Jr., INQ Southern Luzon Bureau

MILITANTS are up in arms against the proposed national ID system, branding it a plot to kill human rights and the civil liberties of the Filipino people. They also threatened to go back to the streets to protest the "repressive" measure.

The Bayan Muna Party-list Representative Satur Ocampo said Malacañang's plan to implement the national ID system was "a ploy

Left may provide swing vote in 2004

By Carlito Pablo and Norman Bordadora

AFTER ITS disastrous decision to boycott the 1986 snap elections, the mainstream Left is poised to play a major role in the 2004 presidential polls, and could even provide the crucial swing vote that would ensure victory for their favored presidential candidate.

With the ratings of the presidential aspirants closely bunched together and no one having a clear track in Malacañang, an endorsement by the Left could spell the difference in the May 2004 elections.

Sen. Rene Saguisag, national president of the Bayan Muna party-list group, yesterday said the "mainstream leftist movement" might throw the support of its close to one million supporters behind the candidate considered to have program of action would come close to their leanings on political and economic issues."

(Saguisag's host is not without basis. In the 2001 party-list elections, Bayan Muna climbed as "unprecedented" 1.7 million votes nationwide, the biggest by a party-list group since the party-list system was introduced in Congress.

Ocampo said the Left would decide whom to support before Bayan Muna holds its national convention on Jan. 11.

"The candidates we will endorse will definitely be invited as guests of honor to our party convention," Ocampo said.

Ocampo said the Left's criteria include "having a high standard of personal integrity, being nationalistic, and an advocate of economic nucleus."

The last criterion means, according to Ocampo, "sharing more of the country's wealth with the poor through land reform and implementing a living wage for workers."

"For humanity's sake," according to Ocampo, the Left's choices will move actor Fernando Poe Jr., former Education Secretary Raul Roco, opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson and President Macapagal-Arroyo.

It will be recalled that the left adopted a boycott policy during the 1986 snap elections called by the late strongman Ferdinand Marcos. Cory Aquino, subject of the mastered Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino, challenged the dictator through the ballot.

The boycott marginalized the Left from the events that lead up to 1986 Edsa revolt that booted out Marcos and installed Mrs. Aquino as the new president.

Ocampo, however, stated that the selection process would be "recency rank."

"We are not ruling out the possibility that we will not endorse a presidential candidate at all if none of the candidates would meet the standards that various militant groups will collectively set," he said.

Ocampo said they were "disappointed" with the platforms of government presented over the weekend by the frontrunners by Roco and Lacson.

"Their declared programs of action are bereft of specific objectives and applications," Ocampo said.

Ocampo said the Left has formed a "national electoral committee," which has been "monitoring the presidential aspirants and will be tasked to come up with an initial assessment on the track records and campaign platforms of the declared candidates."

At this developed, the flagwag Alyansang Makabayan yesterday said the platforms presented by Roco and Lacson before the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry on Saturday were almost the same.

"Whether it's Roco's exhumation or Lacson's peace and order, it doesn't really make much of a difference. Which candidate would say that he is against urbanism or peace and order," Bayan secretary general Teodoro Casiño said.

INT'L SINGING CHAMPS

President Macapagal-Arroyo receives the grand prize trophy won by the Lubao Children's Choir at the recent "Europe and Its Songs" international competition held in Barcelona, Spain. The group from the Lubao Central Elementary School in Bohol also won first prize in the children's category. (MALACAÑANG PHOTO)

Miriam goes back on vow, supports FPJ

By Jerry Esplanada

BARELY a week after declaring she was done with politics, former Sen. Miriam Santiago has thrown herself into the game anew, pledging support for actor Fernando Poe Jr.'s presidential bid.

"Mukhang talagang nakalimutan ako ng aking mister (It's as if I'll get involved because I respect his mother)," Santiago said the other night on ABS-CBN's "Bantulaypulay," chiming Elizabeth Kelly Poe was a close friend.

The fiery lawyer volunteered to represent FPJ in public debates against other candidates.

"Let's see if his opponents are as intelligent as they say they are," she said in emphatic Filipino. Then she looked straight at the camera and addressed those opponents: "You say Ronnie Poe knows nothing. All right, I'll bet you for him."

Santiago had apparently forgotten that, in an keynote interview last July 11, she declared Poe as "incompetent" and "not qualified for public office."

She told this reporter: "I call incompetent anyone in the entertainment industry ... movies, TV radio, print, theater, sports." It was "nothing personal," she said, and vowed to "oppose the candidacy of any entertainer, on all these principles."

Two-and-a-half months after the July interview, Poe and his wife, actress Susan Roces, were among dinner guests at the Santiagos' new La Vista subdivision house in Quezon City.

Speaking on Nov. 21 at the wake of her son Alexander Robert, Santiago had announced she was "removing myself from politics so that (I) may promote Jet-Ali," (the late) her "baby" had always objected to her participation.

All, the younger of her two sons with Narciso Santiago Jr., former interior secretary, had been found dead in his room with a gunshot wound to the head. Police declared it a suicide.

Last Saturday, the old Miriam Santiago was back and roaring, defending Poe against critics, including herself. Where previously she had demanded university degrees of all aspirants for government positions, now she found justification for FPJ's failure to finish college.

"He was working, providing for his widowed mother and his siblings," she said.

'Filled with anger'

During the TV interviews, Santiago also admitted she was still "filled with anger" over Alli's death. "I wanted to shoot myself, too," she said.

The young man's troubles reportedly started when he failed the interviews for admission to the University of the Philippines College of Law. He was enrolled at the Ateneo de Manila University at the time of his suicide.

Blaming members of the UP-U panel for their "true and genuine arrogance of academic pretension," Santiago demanded, "Why did you take it out on my son?" It is what you were evidencing?"

She warned the faculty members who had vented against Alli's admission: "Be careful. Pray that my faith in God restrains me."

On the day of the TV interview, the ex-Integrated commissioner and Quezon City judge recalled, she woke up at 4 a.m. "I sat in the garden, cleaning my gun," she said. "Anger consumed me. I thought I should confront those professors, one by one, in front of their students."

Those "emotionally disturbed individuals" should not be allowed to torment people, Santiago insisted. They had "attacked" Alli, she said, with questions like, "What is your mention to the Constitution that you are mother to mayor?"

Santiago said the panelists did this all the time, singling out children of public figures from among the applicants, "so they would humiliate them. My goodness, they dare call themselves learned people."

Narra tea study 'preliminary'

It's too early to conclude that the Narra tea has a therapeutic effect on HIV patients, according to the head of the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine's (RITM) Research Group.

Dr. Rosanna Ditangco said the group's one-year "Pilot Study on the Possible Immune Enhancing Effect of the Narra Tea in a Food Supplement" started only in February. She said it would take the group "at least nine more months" before it would come up with a scientific assessment of the tea.

After explaining the method to be used in the project, Dr. Ditangco's more than 200 HIV patients voluntarily agreed to take part in the study which she described as "very preliminary."

The participants are those who have not yet taken the antiretroviral medicines. The volunteers must also have a CD4 count of over 200 and are in the early stage of HIV infection.

She said the volunteers were complying with the regimen set by Virgilio Ecenia, who came up with the concoction derived from the narra tree.

Marlen Ronan, PDI lead hero Laura Baroza

WORLD AIDS DAY

UN, partners launch '3 by 5' campaign

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE WORLD Health Organization has warned that Asia is creating an environment for the easy spread of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which has killed nearly 20 million people worldwide, because of the climate of fear and discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS.

Dr. Magnus Gisti, WHO director for the Western Pacific, said the criticism suffered by HIV patients in Asia has discouraged people from determining their HIV status and getting treatment.

"Blaming people and making moral judgments do not help stop the disease from spreading," Gisti said in a statement. He met with Filipinos with HIV and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), and concerned groups at the WHO regional office in Manila on Thursday.

"Evidence from around the world shows that when people are afraid to be tested, they are also afraid to seek treatment and support. Because stigmatized groups tend to become more hidden and opportunities for giving them convenient and information are lost," Gisti said.

The WHO, along with partners like the United Nations Program on AIDS (Unaids), will launch today in time for the World AIDS Day celebration the "3 by 5 campaign," a joint project that seeks to give three million people living with HIV/AIDS access to anti-retroviral (ARV) treatment by 2005.

Persons with AIDS find haven, hope

Continued from page 1

been taking narra tea for two weeks. He said the tea helped his wounds and other skin disorders up to such a short time. Then I told, 'This is it,'" Ecenia narrated.

The good news "signaled something big" for Ecenia, after doctors at the research hospital repeatedly refused to let him carry out trials with his "invention"—a tea made from the crushed bark of the narra tree.

"The man was the first AIDS patient who affirmed the beneficial effects of narra tea to persons like him. It really backed up my convictions that the tea could be a lot of help to those suffering from this incurable disease," Ecenia said.

By their name, he knew he had somehow won over some medical practitioners in the RITM and HM Medicos, a station of the San Lazaro Hospital that takes care of AIDS and HIV-positive patients.

Everything positive about narra tea seemed to happen to Ecenia at unexpected times.

Labor strike

One such moment was the 1996 labor strike at Philippine Air Lines, where Ecenia worked for 32 years as a pilot until he retired that year. He and the dispute allowed him to spend more time doing research on his concoction.

He used his and his wife's savings to fund several laboratory and toxicity tests on narra tea, which he had accidentally discovered in 1991.

While looking for an alternative to cashews to cure his rheumatoid arthritis, he stumbled upon a news story about the powerful healing properties of the mahogany tree to people like him.

After reading the story, Ecenia asked his neighbor for a branch of the same so he could prove the veracity of the supposed benefits of the tropical tree.

"When I did was to cut a portion of the branch and boil it until I came up with a tea mixture which I drank. The swelling and pain I caused by my arthritis were gone a day after I took it," Ecenia narrated.

But he said he mistook the Philippine national tree for the mahogany tree. "I never had any idea what the mahogany looked like. So I thought it was same in Tagalog. But it doesn't matter anymore," he said.

He noticed that narra tea boosted the immune system after some relatives and friends who tried it recovered from several diseases. That observation led him to take time the tea could help persons suffering from AIDS and HIV.

Patience

Ecenia said the RITM and San Lazaro doctors didn't like him much with the hospitals. "I know others doubt my career from the last class that we had to go through a thorough medical test. But I didn't let me down," he said.

He tried to work as a social worker to gain access to the patients. But still the doctors wouldn't let him.

Then he found out that the wife of a former co-worker at PAL was working as a pathologist at the RITM. She met with his friend and asked if he could talk to his wife, Dr. Agnes Bautista-Ilos.

The Bautistas advised me to attend a seminar, which I did. The that introduced me to Dr. Ofelia Monsoza, the head consultant of the RITM for AIDS, who then allowed the trial of narra tea on AIDS patients," Ecenia said.

Rumors in the hospital told him that some AIDS patients have been having great deaths after taking narra tea, Ecenia said.

San Lazaro

However, after a few months of clinical trials, Ecenia received a letter from the RITM telling him that the narra tea study would be terminated. No reasons was given in the letter.

Puzzled by the turn of events, he wrote a letter to then Health Secretary Carmen de Rosales. Rosales endorsed him to Dr. Perla Alfeni, head of the research department of the San Lazaro Hospital, who allowed him to work with 10 patients at the HM.

But because of hospital rules, Ecenia failed to conduct the trials. Undaunted, he asked the doctors at San Lazaro if he could work with AIDS patients by bringing them to his house.

"The doctor told (Dr. DC Yee) (now Hon. Dong) us] has no connection with her. So when I did was to find patients who would consent to rehabilitation using only narra tea," he said.

Adoption

Luckily, a man suffering from AIDS called him up and inquired about the narra tea. The caller then agreed to let Ecenia's bed "in house" patient.

The patient, nicknamed Rodney, stayed for two-and-a-half months with the Ecenias in Pandacan. Another couple afflicted with the disease also stayed with them.

The results of the "rehabilitation" were dramatic when Rodney gained 20 pounds. In two months, the once frail patient could walk without being supported.

Relieving that his mission had just begun, Ecenia thought of helping more AIDS patients. To accommodate them, he sought help from government to convert his three-hectare farm lot here into a sanctuary for AIDS patients.

Atop a hill

A 1.5-km rough road from the main highway leads to the lot, located atop a hill. The place overlooks the rice plains in the southern part of Laguna and Batangas.

Through the Department of Science and Technology's Invention/ Innovation Fund program, Ecenia was able to avail himself of a P50-million loan that he used to develop the farm in 2001. He plastered an adjacent one-hectare property where a factory producing narrotea is now located.

With 1.5 hats, Ecenia said the sanctuary could accommodate 30 patients. "Because of their sensitive situation, the patients should have a healthy urban diet they could talk to. I have also reserved a cottage for volunteers who want to remember," he said.

"I have also taught them how to meditate so they could control their emotions. I know they need to have the courage to fight the virus," Ecenia said.

The center has planted the farm to fruits and vegetables, without using pesticides and other chemicals, to complement the high-protein diet of the patients. Free-range native chickens also provide a good source of chemical-free eggs for them.

Like a loving father, Ecenia has promised the patients with cellular phones so they could communicate with their friends and relatives. "What they need most is the support of their families," he said.

Alternative

Dodoy, a former make-up artist who has been suffering from AIDS for 14 years, admitted to the "amazing healing powers" of the center and the tea. He was the first "adopted son" of the Ecenias to stay at the Wellness Center.

After spending several months at 144, Dodoy thought it would be best for him to try other Ecenia healing offer. He said he had "almost given up on life" before coming to the center.

"My family could not pay anymore for my retroviral drugs. I couldn't even walk a five-foot distance," Dodoy narrated.

In over a month, he gained about 30 pounds at the center.

Three days after drinking the tea, the wounds in his mouth and throat were healed, he said.

Ex-intel chief reclaiming old PNP post

By Christine Esguerra

A FORMER chief of intelligence is set to make a comeback as the top cop in the metropolitan Philippine territorial police crossing this week.

Described by his peers as "one of the best intelligence officers ever," Director Eduardo Ermita is currently police regional director for Central Visayas. Prior to that, he was chief of the directorate for intelligence, a post he held nearly a year before he left to head the PNP's campaign against terrorism, chase top police officials told the Inquirer.

Ermita will replace Chief Supt. Avelino Lumiwas, who is reportedly being groomed to head the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group.

"His return is revenge for the PNP" one of the three senators said of Ermita. "His experience and capabilities are needed at a time when terrorist threats are high."

Ermita is one of the few non-Philippine Military Academy graduates who have risen to highly sensitive ranks. He joined the police service in 1972 as part of the Integrated National Police. Among his key accomplishments was the capture of former communist leader Rodolfo "Commander Kumander Kumander" Salas in 1999.

Another Camp Crame source said Ermita's return was not intended as a demotion for Lumiwas, himself an accomplished intelligence officer. "The CIDG is one of the most sought after units [and it] considered a state [that]," the source said.

Should Lumiwas land the CIDG post, another source said, its current head Eduardo Matillano might be promoted as chief of the directorate for intelligence and detective management.

What might keep Matillano at the CIDG, the source said, was his being the government's main ammunition in the coup charges against Sen. Gregorio Honasan and the Davao family in connection with the failed July 27 Oakwood mutiny.

"Unlike other PNP officials," the source claimed, "Matillano is not afraid to stand head on with the enemies of the administration, such as Honasan and Sen. Panfilo Lacson."

Another top police official requested to be affected by the massive revamp is Deputy Director Gen. Bernardo Wilson, chief of the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO), the source PNP source said.

Wilson, one of the sources said, would be "dumped" into the Philippine Center for Transnational Crime as its head. This would be a promotion of the star for the top PNP post.

One cell no. for 'switchers' proposed

THE NATIONAL Telecommunications Commission (NTC) has been urged to draw up new regulations that would allow cellular phone subscribers to keep their mobile phone numbers even when they switch to other mobile service companies.

Rep. Joseph Santiago (Catanduanes), a former NTC chief, made the proposal shortly after the United States adopted new federal regulations allowing mobile phone users to retain their phone numbers even if they switched carriers.

"We would not have to change mobile cellphone numbers every time we switch to Smart, Globe, Talk n' Text or Sun Cellular," Santiago said.

Apart from the US, at least a dozen other countries now allow subscribers to retain their old number when they switch carriers.

"Mobile phone number portability cannot be avoided by both regulators and operators. It is bound to happen soon. We might as well prepare for it now," Santiago said yesterday.

He added that the kind of "portability" could serve as a catalyst for a fresh surge of capital spending by mobile phone service providers.

Santiago said consumers would be the biggest beneficiaries of portability, because "in order to discourage switching, operators would be forced to improve and add more value to their services." Alecks Pabico

MILF still training terrorists–Ermita

By Christian Esguerra

THE SUSPENSION of the stalled peace talks between the government and the secessionist Moro Islamic Liberation Front appears to be in peril after Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita accused the MILF of still harboring operatives of the regional terror network Jemaah Islamiyah (JI).

In an interview after the Barangay Day there at Army headquarters in Fort Bonifacio, Makati City, Ermita warned that rare conditions for the resumption of peace negotiations was for the MILF to denounce terrorist groups such as the JI and other criminal organizations.

Ermita noted that while top MILF leaders appeared to be adhering to this condition, MILF commanders on the ground were not.

According to Ermita, an undetermined number of JI terrorists continue to receive training, participate in bomb-making, enable MILF terrorists in Mt. Cararao in Lanao del Norte and Mt. Merenas in Lanao del Sur.

Ermita, a member of the government negotiating panel before he assumed the defense portfolio, said that such backdoor assistance consisted of at least 12 men, mainly in Maguindanao. There were also MILF terrorist participating in training exercises, he added.

Agreement

"I don't want to accuse the MILF leadership of serving in bad faith because we have an agreement," Ermita told reporters.

"But if we prove that they are giving active assistance to the JI, then this could adversely affect our talks."

To keep the talks going, Ermita appealed to the MILF leadership not to allow their field commanders to provide sanctuary or any form of assistance to the JI and other international terrorist organizations.

A team from Malaysia is scheduled to arrive in Manila this month to examine the conduct of the ceasefire in Mindanao. The visit is expected to jump-start the talks which were delayed by the recent Organization of the Islamic Conference conference and the retirement of Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad recently.

The government also considers the JI intrusion in Mindanao as a security issue.

"It would [take] only one or two or three small groups [of terrorists] to slip out and create mayhem," Ermita said.

Aside from the JI operatives in Mindanao, at least 33 known JI operatives are being hunted by the military and the Philippine National Police, he said.

Al-Qaida

Citing intelligence information, Ermita said JI operatives in the Philippines were being funded with as much as $50,000 (roughly P2.5 million) in cash that was shipped into the country by a Al-Qaida terrorist network of Osama bin Laden a few months ago.

Through the arrests of the JI for the most part have been "contained" in Mindanao, Ermita did not discount the possibility the group could move to urban centers, especially during the holidays.

"The public should be really alert at all times," he said.

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DENR seizes, frees rare flying foxes, turtles

By N. Bordadora

POLICE officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) recovered 31 flying foxes and 43 endangered sea turtles from a vendor in Batasang, Nueva Vizcaya in the DENR's ongoing campaign against illegal wildlife trade.

Operatives of the DENR regional office in Cagayan Valley seized the endangered species from the vendor, whose name was withheld after the agency to help maltreatment officials make the names of the animals and their dealers.

Environment Secretary Elisea G. Gozun ordered regional field operatives of the DENR to intensify the drive to prevent and conserve the country's wildlife and their habitats.

DENR Regional Executive Director Antonio G. Principe said the vendor transported the flying foxes, some were released in the forests of Kasibu, Nueva Vizcaya, while the remaining eight died. Two of the dead animals were preserved while the others were found (days) they were in an advanced state of decomposition.

On the other hand, all the seized turtles were released in Cataggar Lake in Iligan City, Cagayan.

Principe said the vendor borrowed P5,000 from a boat chiefs to be able to engage in the wildlife trade.

"She begged for the return of the endangered wildlife species for personal as love because she was not aware that this was prohibited. She doesn't know how she could pay back her loan," Principe said.

Her request was not granted but she was instructed that she could be penalized.

CA upholds BIR exec's suspension

THE COURT of Appeals has upheld the six-month suspension of a Bureau of Internal Revenue official accused of falsifying his credentials.

In a 30-page decision, the CA 15th Division upheld the decision of Deputy Ombudsman Margarita Gervasio Jr to suspend BIR official Apolinario L. Mirasolles.

Mirasolles was accused in March of making it appear that he had passed the civil service examination when Civil Service Commission records showed he had not.

"We find, after due consideration, that the preventive suspension was imposed after the Ombudsman considered documentary evidence indicating that the petitioner has represented that he possesses civil service eligibility which the Civil Service Commission certifies that he has none," the CA said.

Mirasolles had petitioned the CA to overturn his suspension, saying the Ombudsman had acted with grave abuse of discretion and denied him his right to due process.

Philip C. Tubeza

Lakas exec questions FPJ citizenship

Senate President Franklin Drilon, the new chair of the Liberal Party, replied tersely when asked whether he thought Poe was serious about his bid. "I think his handlers are," he said.

Pangilinan, also a member of the Liberal Party, said that if Poe had been really serious all along, then he wished him a "speedy recovery."

"But if he wasn't, that would be most unfortunate because we cannot have a presidency by proxy," he said.

But Soto, in a news briefing on Thursday before Poe failed to show up at the biggest annual gathering of the country's businessmen, said Poe was dead serious about his candidacy.

"In a very short while, FPJ will be presenting his economic views and I will not be surprised if members, in fact leaders from the PCCI, in the very near future will be supporting and helping in formulating an economic recovery program that will be feasible and doable for our country," Soto said.

It was Soto who read Poe's five-page statement at the conference of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

In his radio interview, Alvarez also took pockets at the statement that Soto had read.

"Drawing up a platform of government is not as simple as putting ideas on paper and reading them to the public. You should study all details and be ready to defend them," Alvarez said.

He said Poe's nonpatriotism issue, which Soto said was his main asset as a presidential candidate, would not be enough to deal the enemy.

Poe's simple plan of running the government through broad consultation with Filipinos and other foreign governments would lead to questions of who was leading the country and who was accountable for the government's actions, Alvarez said.

Lacson's ratings

The camp of one presidential contender who did shore up at the Business conference seemed confident that their man's apparent ratings would improve.

Sen. Ramon Bong Revilla Jr., campaign manager for opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson, said yesterday that people would find Lacson's "double" program of government improvement.

In a statement, Zamora noted that many people had not yet made up their minds on whom to vote for in the May elections.

The same statement also highlighted what Ilipe Michaela of Pulse Asia had to say about Lacson's approval ratings in the coming months.

In an interview with the ANC station on Saturday, Mirasol said Lacson's ratings could still double in the coming months from the 11 percent rating he got in the last survey.

"He can more than double his electoral preference," Zamora quoted Mirasol as saying. "Four in Metro Manila, I can say he can go as high as 20-30 percent."

"But if the GMA wants to select him as their candidate, and if the opposition wants to cluster around him, you cannot [take] him out as a possible winner of Malacañang, too," Mirasol said.

The LDP president, Sen. Edgardo Angara, said the united opposition would have a standard-bearer, his running mate, as well as a senatorial slate in 14 days.

Angara, the leading supporter of Poe, said the announcement would come after the LDP stalwarts with four other parties—the Nationalist People's Coalition, Puwersa ng Masang Pilipino, PDP-Laban and Reporma.

He said the choice was now between Poe and Lacson, adding both men would keep their word that they would respect the result.

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Malonzo's stance

Another movie actor who used to be outspoken about his support for President Macapagal-Arroyo's bid in 2004 has decided to keep mum.

Asked about Poe's candidacy, Caloocan City Mayor Boy Malonzo said, "I won't comment on it yet."

Malonzo has been a staunch ally of Mrs. Macapagal. In several interviews, the mayor had sometimes expressed his support for her.

When his Kampi group decided to break her earlier promise not to run in 2004, Malonzo said she was entitled to change her mind especially since the country needed her.

During the height of destabilization attempts against Mrs. Macapagal after the July 27 Oakwood mutiny, Malonzo was one of the first local officials to announce their support for the President.

"We in these hinterlands will just keep quiet," Malonzo said in a phone interview, speaking in Filipino. *Ako nagkomplikado pa iyan. Ako don't want bad blood between us.*" With a report from Edson Tandoc Jr.

The Daily Gospel

Monday, December 1, 2003
1st Week of Advent

1st Reading: Is 2:1-5
Gospel: Mt 8:5-11

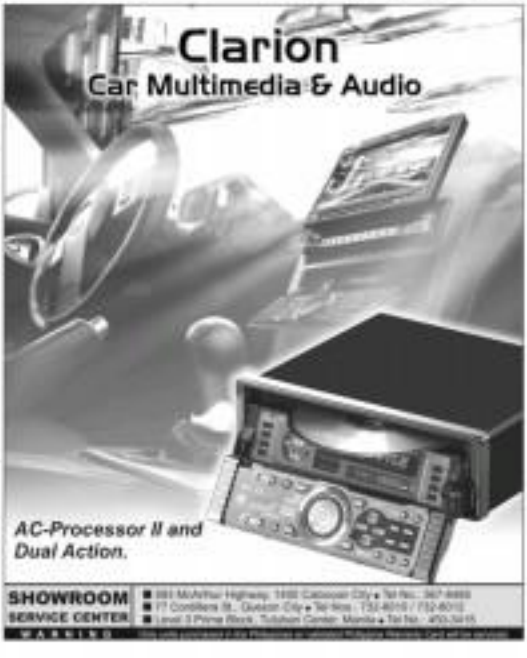
When Jesus entered Capernaum, an army captain approached him to ask his help. "Sir, my servant lies sick at home. He is paralyzed and suffers terribly." Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him."

The captain answered, "I am not worthy to have you come my roof. Just give an order and my boy will be healed. He's myself, a junior officer, give orders to my soldiers. And I say to one, 'Go,' he goes, and to the other, 'Come,' he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' he does it."

When Jesus heard this he was astonished and said to those who were following him, "I tell you, I have not found such faith in Israel. I say to you, many will come from east and west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob at the feast in the kingdom of heaven."

Commentary:

The birth of the centurion enables Jesus to heal his servant. Faith in Jesus is the basis to have a new relationship in the building up of the Kingdom of God in Jesus, everybody is equal in dignity. There is no master or slave, neither Jew nor gentile. Everybody is invited to participate in the great banquet of the Kingdom.



7 spies, 2 diplomats, 2 GIs killed

AM IRAQ: youth stands on a burned car south of Baghdad a day after a deadly attack on Spanish troops. AFP

November with 70 American soldiers slain along with 23 other allied soldiers. It has been the bloodiest month of the war since began March 20.

A military statement said the two US soldiers were killed when a tank force from the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment was hit Saturday by rocket-propelled grenades and mortar fire east of the border town of Rutabah, 300 km southwest of Baghdad.

In Mahmudiyah, 25 km south of Baghdad, assailants ambushed on Saturday a team of Spanish military intelligence officers, killing seven of them. One Spaniard escaped the assault.

Television footage of the aftermath of the ambush showed several bodies along a highway in rain, their headlights on, doors by a dirt. "People ambushed us and ... and ... we apparently aimed for was being filmed ... kicked his foot in the air with a body. An older youth stood his foot on a corpse, an icon raised in triumph.

"We saw three car seats and blood. Do you, eh Saddam," some in the group chanted in Arabic, witnesses said.

On Sunday, witnesses at the scene, about 50 km south of Baghdad, said the Spaniards had been traveling in a pair of sport utility vehicles when insurgents ambushed them opened fire. One of the SUVs careened off the road into a ditch.

The occupants fled the car and were shot at the roadside, perhaps by a second group of assailants involved in the ambush. On Tuesday the Iberia saw remains of the car would be seen to a wrecky ditch at the side of the road, with a group of villagers scavenging its parts.

Witnesses said the four men in the second car were also killed at the side of the road nearby, apparently by a grenade that was thrown or fired at their vehicle. Blood could be seen on leather seating and a broken pair of glasses lay on the road.

"All of them are dead," said 13-year-old Tareq Jassim, a local villager who was at the scene on Sunday. "All of them are scorpions."

Japanese diplomats

The two Japanese diplomats were killed by unidentified gunmen on Saturday as they stopped to buy food and drinks at a roadside stall in the village of Mahmudiya on the road between Baghdad and Tikrit, Lt. Col. William MacDonald said Sunday.

The diplomats, who were on their way to attend a reconstruction conference, were not traveling with a military escort, MacDonald said.

The attacks on America's allies appear to be part of an effort to undercut the cohesion of the US-led coalition. Guerrillas also have targeted Iraqis seen as collaborating with the occupation authorities, such as police officers and local officials.

The latest killings came more than two weeks after 19 Italians were killed in a car bomb attack in Nasiriyah.

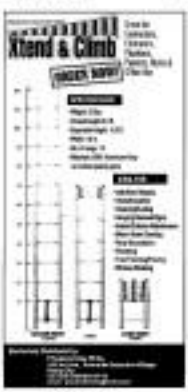
In Tokyo, Japan's Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi said there would be no change in Japan's plans to dispatch troops to support the US-led reconstruction of Iraq. The deaths were the first involving the Japanese in Iraq since the UK declaration.

Spokespersons for Spanish Prime Minister José María Aznar also affirmed her the attack wouldn't cause Spain to end its presence in Iraq.

US President George W. Bush called Aznar "to express his sympathies on behalf of the American people," said White House spokesperson Allen Abney. Spain's King Juan Carlos professed his profound sorrow over the deaths.

Spain, one of the fiercest supporters of the US-led invasion to oust Saddam Hussein, has sent 1,300 soldiers to help maintain order in previous months, a Spanish diplomat attached to Spain's intelligence agency was assassinated near his residence in Baghdad on Oct. 5, and a Spanish Navy captain was killed in the truck bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad on Aug. 19.

Despite the spate of killings in formation, the top US commander in Iraq said the overall number of guerrilla attacks on coalition forces was falling off. AP



Poe bid likely to self-destruct

PAGE ONE/A1

...ered Poe jumped the gun on it. His premature decision initiated his go-it-alone and non-team-based political maneuvers, exposing the fatal disarray of the opposition and its glaring lack of discipline, even before it could mount a serious campaign for 2004.

Poe's announcement resulted in offending Vice President Teofisto Guingona, a close-to-silent aspirant for the presidency, and in making him somewhat cool to his presidential intentions. Lacson believes that the road show process, introduced by LDP leader Sen. Edgardo Angara, was pushing him out of the selection process to make way for Poe.

More fragmented

Angara and Lacson are deeply antagonistic to each other, and Poe's announcement makes hard on the rank of anything for a single candidate for the opposition plagued by divisiveness. Poe's move has deepened the cleavage.

Now, the opposition faces a conundrum. Lacson insists he is not backing off to make way for Poe, to which the opposition denounces as the "dismissed" selection method, and Poe cannot withdraw without losing face.

If the opposition was fractured at the start of the road show, it is now even more decimated, after Poe's announcement, which appeared to convey a fait accompli that would allow the actor to lock the opposition nomination, and thus everybody else to give him a head start to gain momentum.

Now, the opposition is even more fragmented. The LDP machine, which should give the only political vehicle to run a campaign with a semblance of an organization, is already limping as the opposition prepares to march to ticket of presidential, vice presidential and senatorial candidates.

Poe's worst nemesis is his own inexperience and his political wrangler and convenient buddy, former President Joseph Estrada. Comparisons between Estrada and Poe does not yield evidence that Poe could express the Estrada act, much less his smashing victory in the 1998 elections.

Poe suffers in comparison to Estrada. Unlike Poe, who does not seem to have an idea of the importance of organization and party, Estrada had to politicize almost the critical role of parties, although Estrada had been immensely popular months ahead of the elections, while Poe is pathetically struggling to gain momentum in the public opinion polls. Estrada realized that popularity alone could not make him survive the election, although in 1998, he faced relatively weaker opponents.

Estrada had a spectacular party and he had to ride on Angara's LDP which was strong in Luzon. On the other hand, Poe faces a campaign debt, which, according to the Pulse Asia survey in November, has at least three main contenders—President Macapagal Arroyo, former Education Secretary Raul Roco and Pimentel—with no one emerging far ahead of the pack.

POE: Flaky(ing) and wing-ridden candidacy?

Pro-poor rhetoric

If the opposition, however, can overcome its fractiousness and present a single presidential candidate (a remote possibility at this late stage), that candidate will be saddled on a crippled carriage.

Poe claims the same consistency as Estrada's (the poor and the socioeconomic classes), but Poe has not identified with them, and his domain has no pro-poor substance.

Thus, his claim on the poor consistency is based on flimsy ground.

The seven opinion surveys show that both President Macapagal and Roco are running ahead in the lower classes, and it does not show that Poe has a natural constituency of his own, except encouragement, many of whom have been disenchanted by Estrada's failure to help the poor during his presidency except locking down on a class war against the elite.

Comparison with Estrada is a political liability for Poe and if he handles issues he is seeking the presidency without a "baggage" or no political debts to pay. But Poe has a heavy baggage that weighs him down—the memory of the failure of Estrada to deliver benefits to the poor despite the empowering of "Erap para sa mahihirap."

Who gains?

The self-destruction of the Poe campaign is traced to his organizational weakness, highlighted by the disarray of the opposition. The disarray was dramatized over the weekend, when Sen. Roberto Nograles took a leave from the LDP in protest against the narrowing of the opposition choices to either Poe or Lacson, both of whom he considered extensions of Estrada. Nograles has joined the coalition of small parties clustered as a third force around Roco.

The humiliation of the grid-lock between Poe and Lacson in the opposition are either Mr. Macapagal in Rizal, or both. Either will like nothing better than to persuade the gridlock which can only split the opposition votes.

But more evidence for Poe is the fact that the business community is turning hostile from the large and classroom Estrada presidency to a more aggressive and outspoken to mouthpiece to wrest power in the opposition Poe's candidacy.

The press statement to workers over the weekend, three days after Poe's announcement, that shocked the economic and security managers more dramatically than the resignation of Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho the previous week.

The peso plummeted to a record closing low of P55.75 to the US dollar on Friday from P55.69 the previous day, exhibiting deeper market anxieties fueled by uncertainties over Poe's competence in managing the economy and providing coherent leadership.

While the markets have shown volatility over a series of politically unsettling events over the past six months, they have never been more blunt in sending a message of disapproval or concern than in their reaction to the Poe announcement. While there was skepticism about unpredictable new Estrada's candidacy in 1998, the markets were not rattled in responding his upcoming presidency to the case of Poe, the markets showed more profound nervousness.

The markets' powerful shock reaction, shot down Poe's presidential bid even before it could take off from a historical launching pad—the opposition's party nomination.

As Poe faces further critical tests of his politics in the coming days, pressures are building up that could hasten the early implosion of his candidacy and endanger his candidacy.

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The WORLD

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Oil cartel, Russia on verge of cold war

VIENNA—With Russia now exporting more oil than Saudi Arabia, the scene is set for a cold war between Moscow and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec), industry experts say.

The Russians are refusing to go along with Opec demands for a concerted drop in production, paving looming problems for the cartel as Opec oil ministers prepare to meet here on Thursday.

Russia does not belong to the organization but has become a prime mover on world petroleum markets, and there is not much Opec can do about it.

"The sharp rise in Russian oil exports, this year—which will continue next year—says a great deal about the question," Leo Drollas of the London-based Centre for Global Energy Studies in London.

Russia is pumping some 8.6 million barrels of oil a day, compared to 7.96 million for Saudi Arabia.

This, Drollas said, was "changing the power structure of the industry."

Opec wants all oil-producing countries, whether or not they are members of the cartel, to reduce output in order to make way for exports by Iraq, which is expected to be producing 3.5 million barrels a day within five years.

Without a reduction in the offer, the addition of Iraqi exports will create a glut on the market, making it difficult for Opec to maintain the $25 ($21 euros) per barrel, which it sees as the "fair price" for long-term market stability.

But the fact that Russia's Brent crude oil trends around $29 a barrel because of what Drollas calls conspicuous speculative pressures, gives Russia an incentive to cash in output. In fact, it is likely to increase production to 9.2 million barrels a day until 2010, according to Francis Perrin of the magazine Petrole et Gaz et Opec.

"Russia has no interest in collaborating with Opec," Drollas said. "It's better off fighting another cold war with it."

"It's the so-called 'first-strike syndrome,'" he added. "While Russia refuses to cut production, Gore Gas-to-do it if it wants to maintain prices, as Riyadh gets a free ride on production levels and high prices without giving anything back in return."

Frederic Lasserre, an oil industry analyst with Investir Bourses, said Opec is caught in a vicious circle.

AFP

Catholics seek exemption from US contraceptive law

SAN FRANCISCO—If you don't believe in the law, do you have to follow it?

That's the question before courts in New York and California, which are being asked to exempt branches of the Catholic Church from state laws requiring contraceptives be included in employee prescription drug plans. Under church doctrine, contraception is a sin.

"The Catholic Church explicitly teaches that artificial contraception is morally unacceptable and, if knowingly and freely engaged in, sinful," Catholic Charities of Sacramento attorney James Sweeney said.

When California's law was enacted in 2000, the group unsuccessfully sought a court ruling to bar the law from being enforced on the church's charity outreach programs. A state appeals court also denied the church relief. Now the California Supreme Court is set to hear the case Dec. 2.

Version of the law have been adopted in 20 states after lawmakers concluded private employer prescription plans without contraceptive benefits discriminated against women. Lawyers closely following the debate said the only other legal challenge is in the lower courts of New York, before a judge of the Supreme Court of Albany County.

California's case is years ahead of the New York litigation, and civil rights groups, health care companies and Catholic organizations have filed extensive position papers with the court.

"It certainly could be very persuasive on other courts," said Rebekah Diller, a director of the civil rights group New York Civil Liberties Union, who is following the litigation.

At issue is a collision of the right of a religious to practice what it preaches and the state's required rights of thousands of women employed by church-affiliated groups to be insured for contraceptives.

Catholic Charities (itself) employs more than 1,000 workers in California and New York, but a ruling favoring the charity could also prevent more than 100,000 employees at 77 church-affiliated hospitals in California and New York from benefiting from the laws.

Both regulators point to US Supreme Court rulings in favor of a ban on polygamy despite objections from Mormons, and against Native Americans who were denied unemployment insurance after being fired for using peyote during religious ceremonies. AP

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Hot gifts for those who have everything

LOS ANGELES—Businessmen jetting and wisely well-heeled shoppers this season are bypassing lakes at the mall and checking out high-end holiday gift guides for homes, yachts and even celebrities on custody.

The holiday issues of the dailies! Bugging a showcase by discriminating buyers, often a warehouse of vehicles owned or previously owned by celebrities, including country singer Alan Jackson's 2006 Excalibur roadster on sale $45,995, and a Mercedes-Benz CL600 limousine previously built uniquely Colin receiver Marvin Harrison priced at $95,000.

Conspicuous consumption connoisseurs who prefer "new" to "used" can consider the 612-horsepower Rosche Carrera GT package offered for $440,000 in the annual gift guide from the luxury lifestyle magazine Robb Report.

The package includes the car, driving instructions by champion driver Helio Hayward at Callaway's fabulous Raceway, special Rosche luggage and lodging at Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

- The 45-metre yacht Magellan, $22.5 million.
- The venerable Casa del Mundo estate in Montecito, near Santa Barbara, built in 1924, $40 million.
- 1,556-square-metre home in Florida's exclusive Jupiter Creek, the nation's First Bubble community, plus two adjoining hangars and an aircraft, $10.7 million.

Other holiday ideas in the Robb Report's 20th annual Ultimate Gift Guide:

- A 6.6-metre Deep Flight Aurora submarine, $1.7 million.
- An 18th century violin crafted by Antonio Stradivari. Just under $4 million.
- A diamond powder collection—all 462 carats' worth, $15 million. AP

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Army chief hits 'Sharon Plan'

JERUSALEM—Israel's army chief has private reservations about Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's proposal to take unilateral steps if peacemaking with the Palestinians fails, Israeli newspapers reported on Sunday.

Lt. Gen. Moshe Yaalon's reported comments to the Israeli media underscore added opposition that he and four former Israeli security chiefs leveled recently against Sharon's tough policies toward the Palestinians.

Asked about the report, an army spokesperson said the military does not comment on account of purported private remarks.

Sharon raised the possibility in public remarks on Thursday that he would take unilateral moves, including the dismantling of settlement Jewish settlements, should efforts to promote a US-backed peace "road map" collapse.

Haaretz said that under the "Sharon Plan," Israel would then unilaterally draw a border for a Palestinian state in the Gaza Strip and in four chief hubs of the West Bank, a homeland for nearly three Palestinians out of four.

Yaalon, the newspaper said, believes unilateral removal of settlements would render "support to none" to the force of a three-year-old Palestinian uprising and should be done only as part of a comprehensive peace arrangement.

Haaretz said Yaalon believes the Army should first pull out of "quiet areas" in the West Bank as a way of wounding the Palestinians and pave the way for a future peace deal.

Yaalon, challenging government policy, said recently in newspaper interviews that tough moral restrictions on Palestinians only boosted support for militants.

Yaalon's reported remarks added to growing calls at home and abroad for Sharon to end violence and bolster the status of Palestinian moderates against militants by reining in settlers and lifting blockades imposed on Palestinian towns.

Israel has also come under international criticism for its construction of a barrier keeping deep into the West Bank, a "security fence" it says is aimed at keeping suicide bombers out of its cities. Palestinians call the barrier a land grab.

Reuters

WORLDBRIEFS

32 die in Congo plane crash

KINSHASA—An Antonov-26 plane crashed in southwestern Congo shortly after take-off on Saturday, killing all 32 Congolese passengers and five crew, officials said. It was not known how many crew members were on the plane when it crashed near the town of Bandundu, more than 500 km southeast of the capital Kinshasa. Information Minister Didi Manara Iwa told Reuters. The cause of the crash was unknown. "The passengers were Congolese. There were nine dead Congolese, but as this was an Antonov the plane may well have been Russian. But I need to check," said Manara Iwa.

Reuters

Blast in Georgia

TBILISI—Georgia's defense minister pledged Saturday that the army was supportive of the country's new leadership as members gave after a bomb attack targeted a park that is a rival to the president of ousted President Eduard Shevardnadze. "The army is outside of politics, of foreign, confidential, policy," said Defense Minister David Tevzadze following reports that the armed forces were opposed to Shevardnadze's resignation after a popular revolt. The blast outside the headquarters of the Labor Party rank. Saturday, wounding at least seven, any injuries, a top party official said.

AFP

Mandela's AIDS concert

CAPE TOWN—Music The Corrs, Beyonce Knowles and Peter Gabriel are due to perform Nelson Mandela's call to help fight the scourge of AIDS on Saturday, uniting an unusual entertainment lineup across the world on the internet. Reuters. M. and the world's leading AIDS campaigners, joined 43,000 fans who packed into a stadium in South Africa's main province Cape Town while millions more ally for the first online gig concert. "AIDS is different, overcoming ignorance starts by talk," Mandela, who retired 2 years ago and is living South Africa's apartheid era, told the crowd. AIDS has hit South Africa harder than any other country, with one in nine adults and 30% of pregnant women infected, and is even spreading as much. Nearly 10 million children have been orphaned by AIDS. Mandela, who was given a South African to adopt, has launched a campaign called 46664—the prisoner number—from which proceeds will go to help AIDS orphans and people in the developing and infected.

Reuters

Progress on EU charter

NAPLES, Italy—EU foreign ministers made more progress than some expected in tough weekend talks on a new constitution for the bloc, but the central battle surrounding voting among member states seemed unclear to resolve. "As far as disagreement with some members were concerned, we achieved significant progress," said France Italian Franco Frattini, chairman of the Council of EU foreign ministers. The committee, who hosted his satisfactory at 11 member states and the 15 countries that joined bloc, will be a substitute by Saturday, Dec. 13, deciding the Brussels committee to the specific matters in and the possible first deadline.

Reuters

Turkey synagogue blast

ISTANBUL—Turkish police said on Saturday they had arrested a man who rented and helped plan one of four suicide bombings that killed dozens of people in Istanbul earlier this month. The suspect was arrested with a false identification and while trying to cross across Turkey's border to Iran, Interior Minister Abdulkadir Aksu told reporters in Ankara. The bombing of Istanbul's Jewish synagogues and international bank branch attacks by Islamic militants on the British consulate. Authorities killed 61 people and injured hundreds. The suspect in the Istanbul synagogue area with the other attackers on the day of the explosion and gave the order to the attack, Aksu said.

Reuters

N. Irish crisis talks

BELFAST—Efforts to salvage the Northern Ireland power-sharing process began on Saturday after election gains for Protestant and Catholic hardliners threw the peace deal of the province's three-year-old power-sharing executive. Britain's chief minister in the province, Paul Murphy, held talks with local politicians after a result that pleased the rival Sinn Fein and Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) parties, who have committed to the peace deal. Speaking upon the 25-year-old Peoples, as the leading voice of Northern Ireland's Catholic minority in Sinn Fein, the political ally of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), which fully refuses to contemplate handing over the Good Friday accord.

Reuters

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OPINION

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Margin of error

EDITORIAL

THE LATEST Pulse Asia survey of likely presidential candidates has heightened the country's triennial malady: election fever. The results of the poll, taken between Nov. 4 and 17, were announced the same week Fernando Poe Jr. became the third popular movie actor in the country's history to seek the presidency.

Many media organizations led off the survey story by cautioning either ex-senator Raul Roco's fond (a chore of the most likely election scenarios, or Poe's surprising strength in two of them. If his numbers hold, Poe may well follow in the footsteps of his fellow actor and close friend, deposed President Joseph Estrada, rather than those of matinee idol Rogelio de la Rosa, who withdrew from the presidential race in 1961.

It is instructive to note, however, that the Pulse Asia news release did not focus on the survey leaders. Instead, the polling firm zeroed in on the statistical truth: "survey data indicate a close fight among the contenders for the presidency."

"If the May 2004 presidential elections were a three-way fight involving President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (Poe and Roco) ... it would be a tight race to the finish between the last two personalities," Roco would get 35 percent of the votes, while Poe would win 34 percent.

"Meanwhile, if these three personalities and Sen. Panfilo Lacson were contesting the presidency, it would be a three-cornered fight" between the Presidency (26 percent), Poe (25), and Roco (20).

In the press statement issued by Makiraling, the emphasis was naturally on a different scenario tested by the survey: an eight-candidate race, where the President led the pack with 24 percent of the vote. (In the 1992 elections, in a field that was just as crowded, Fidel Ramos won the presidency with just about the same proportion of the vote.)

Do the contrasting reports—those of media, Pulse Asia, and the Palace—suggest that surveys are, in truth, a tissue of damned lies and statistics?

They can be, are most keen to distinguish between scientific polls, which depend on the laws of probability and the scientific method, and nonscientific ones, such as call-in surveys.

"The major distinguishing difference between scientific and nonscientific polls," write Sheldon R. Gawiser and G. Evans Witt in their classic "20 Questions" primer for the US National Council on Public Polls, "is who picks the respondents for the survey. In a scientific poll, the pollster identifies and seeks out the people to be interviewed; in an unscientific poll, the respondents usually 'volunteer' their opinions, selecting themselves for the poll." (The primer can be read at http://www.ncpp.org/qpjan.htm.)

Thus, the popular phrase is as true as "poll" as TV's "Debate with Pete and Mare" is always entertaining, sometimes controversial—and, statistically, never useful.

A well-conducted scientific poll, on the other hand, can be more useful, accurately reflecting the opinion or preferences or sentiments of a national community. These surveys—here we include those of Pulse Asia and Social Weather Stations—play an important role in modern democracy; they cannot be a substitute for elections, but they must be welcomed even when they bear bad news, because the citizens of a representative democracy speak through them.

It is possible, however, that even when conducted according to the strictest standards, a scientific poll can get it wrong. This can happen in the case of a survey among voters, when the respondents fit the numbers sample criteria but are not likely to vote.

It is also possible that a survey can mimic the scientific language—probability samples, confidence levels, margins of error—to get it deliberately wrong. "An example of suspect polls are private polls conducted by a political campaign," write Gawiser and Witt. "The poll may have terribly slanted questions or a strange sampling methodology, all with a tactical campaign purpose."

As the race to May 10 heats up, we can expect more surveys. Many will pretend to be what they are not. It is our collective responsibility, as a democratic people, to read each independently and to separate the good from the false.

Mayor Gordon tells why they oppose Subic seaport

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

LAST Nov. 27, this column dealt on the quarrel over the development of the seaport in the former American base in Subic between former Rep. Felicito Payumo, chief of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA), and the Gordons—Senator-Secretary Richard, Olongapo Mayor Kate and Congressman Gordon. Payumo, Bob Calderon of the Bases Conversion Development Authority (BCDA) and the Gordons were invited to host Monday's Explorer in Manila to debate the pros and cons of the new port but only Payumo and Calderon showed up. Mayor Gordon said they were not invited. But secretary said she sent the invitations.

Anyway, I presented the reasons the Gordons were objecting to the construction of three additional berths for a container terminal and Cubi Point, and Payumo and Calderon refuted them one by one.

Mayor Gordon wasn't happy with that and handed a letter explaining in detail why they are objecting to it. It is not a "family feud," the mayor said. It "is not about local politics and personalities. This is about serving our people here, the burden of an unnecessary debt caused by the desire to build a facility in an environmentally sensitive area where there is a better alternative."

It is very difficult to explain to the Filipino people, Mayor Gordon wrote, "that while the private sector is willing to pay for the container terminal's construction, pay the government at least P140 million annually for its use, and build it in the Naval Supply Depot (Camposanto), an area that even the World Bank says is most suitable, the SBMA is insisting on making the government pay P58 billion for the project, without any clear indication how it is going to pay for it and who is going to use it, and build it in an ecologically sensitive area.

"There is no need to borrow US$157 million and provide a counterpart fund of US$28 million to build this port because as early as 1996, several international port operators have expressed interest in developing the port at no cost to the government. The facilities strategic by the SBMA and BCDA to pass on this debt to the Filipino people is a blatant betrayal of our people.

"Let us not be fooled by misinformed statements like 'if we do not begin construction now, when? When we have already lost all our trade to our neighbors?' Phlet this sounds enticing, the figures tell a different story.

"The builders in the 1996 port privatization project, namely Franchisee International Terminals, International Container Terminal Services Inc., and Royal Port Investors, among the largest and most reputable international port operators, projected that the SBIT-Camposanto, once fully developed, would be able to handle up to 1 million TEUs of cargo annually, a volume that would only be attained 24 years after development.

"The construction of Mr. Payumo's Cubi container terminal is based on the assumption that the terminal will be able to handle 900,000 TEUs annually. To put this projection into perspective, bear in mind that the current cargo throughput of Subic stands at 53,000 TEUs annually, which includes the movement of export containers. The cargo volume includes all the products being shipped for Subic's raw industrial parks and various industrial locators in order to achieve this 900,000 TEU volume that would justify the Cubi container terminal's construction, we would need to build 16 more Subics. Obviously, this cannot be realistically done.

"Since 1998, the growth rate of the GDP of Central Luzon dropped from 6.3 percent to 2.7 percent. Its percentage share in the country's GDP dropped from 9.6 percent to 8.9 percent. All apologies to the local and foreign media who have been calling to ask me what I think about the political situation, whose calls I have ignored. I have been swamped with work of late. Pepe Diokno, chair of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) and the Gordons—Tourism Secretary Richard, Olongapo Mayor Kate and Congressman Gordon. Payumo, Bob Calderon of the Bases Conversion Development Authority (BCDA) and the Gordons were invited to host Monday's Explorer in Manila to debate the pros and cons of the new port but only Payumo and Calderon showed up. Mayor Gordon said they were not invited. But secretary said she sent the invitations.

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"Since 1998, the growth rate of the GDP of Central Luzon dropped from 6.3 percent to 2.7 percent. Its percentage share in the country's GDP dropped from 9.6 percent to 8.9 percent. Subic, having lost many of its major manufacturers such as RCA (found Ray Cables and Thomson Electronics, has been unable to generate the industrial output that used to be in Central Luzon.

"There have been no major investing investments into Subic. However, there has been a proliferation of trading companies engaged in tax-smuggling activities. There have also been reports of rampant smuggling of alcohol and canned meat...

"Mr. Payumo claims that the seaport and the airport will operate to mutually complement each other. In 1997, when the port privatization bidding was halted, the Japan International Cooperation Agency provided for the SBMA that a container port be built in Cubi. They wanted, however, that the development of a port in this area would lead to the eventual closure of the airport. Likely interference between aircraft maneuvering and port navigational equipment as well as lack of maneuvers and loiter area will affect aircraft safety. In fact, when Royal Investment Services operated in the 1990s, Federal Express seized aircraft over the proximity of cranes to the airport, as these would interfere with navigational aids.

"In addition, the traffic from trucks and other construction equipment in the area of Cubi Point will compromise the security of the Subic Bay International Airport. With the threat of global terrorism, there is a need to ensure that services such as the counter-service of Federal Express are not prevented from penetration by terrorist groups. It has been reported that groups like al-Qaida are now targeting cargo carriers in the implementation of their terrorist activities. The operation of a seaport and container terminal frequented by customers, brokers, dock workers and delivery trucks inside an international airport, separated only by a fence makes the airport, whose operations are highly sensitive, extremely vulnerable."

Tomorrow: Mayor Gordon's comeuppance about the environment.

Lay of the land

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

MP apologies to the local and foreign media who have been calling to ask me what I think about the political situation, whose calls I have ignored. I have been swamped with work of late. Pepe Diokno, chair of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority, is on case. It provides a pretty accurate picture of how things stand among the candidates. It's just a question of finding the reasons behind the results, and seeing under what conditions those results would hold.

That Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo would win if you have eight or nine presidential candidates stands to reason. The popular candidates—Bernardo Poe Jr. and Nele de Castro in particular...would cancel out each other and the rest of the votes would be divided among the others, leaving the one with the strongest party organization, resources, urban constituency, to take the field. That is the good news for GMA, which is the one her handlers decided to train per cent of the world. The bad news for her is that it's not going to happen. Only four, or at most five, presidential aspirants will appear.

It's not surprising that Panfilo Lacson lags far behind in a four-cornered fight between Raul Roco, FPJ, GMA and him. That follows logically from an earlier survey by Pulse Asia that showed Lacson's ratings to not have improved despite the fact that most Filipinos found Lacson guilty as Mike Arroyo was. The overwhelming majority thinks Mike Arroyo is into Pelaf. That is a case of the message being credible despite of the messenger not being so.

But that may also explain the flaw of the survey itself, which, unlike the Church Report on Pelaf or Erap, did not propose a field where a lot of people questioned the problem at the time. If you pursue the Lacson appeal, they said, you would find yourself on the opposition ramp. A spurious argument, but certainly held sway.

But that raises the question of why Lacson lacks credibility. The answer to that is that he blows from the thunderstorm of being associated with Erap while enjoying only few of its advantages. He was Erap's chief hostage to extortion. A good deal of the Chinese community is thankful to him for curbing kidnapping, but a good deal of the national community detests him for adding to other forms of crime, through the PACC. His crime fighting was very selective, and looked calculated to benefit those that could benefit him. That hasn't been lost on the public.

Like other "tough guys" that came before him, although Cory in particular, Lacson is either loved or hated. Like Cory, who did not last appeal to the unwashed but to the well-heeled who were fearful of things and other messiness, Lacson's strength is only in the cities where crime is a big thing. (As will probably share the same fate as Cory, who ended up way down in the 1998 elections.

What Lacson does have is money. He was the most liquid senatorial candidate in the 2001 elections. He was Erap's last-hired boy, the one Erap was pressing to succeed him, and Lacson was said to build a war chest for that. Which almost by definition could not have come from legal sources. It is a testament to Victor Corpus's shooting abilities he never managed to pin him down on this. On the contrary, it was Lacson who would raise the issue of illegal wiretapping against GMA.

Unfortunately for Lacson, while having the money, he doesn't have Erap's charisma. People were saying it even then: Erap's popularity is non-transferable. Lacson's showing thus far proves it.

It is not surprising either that GMA should land only third in people's preferences in a four-cornered fight. That follows too not just from Pulse Asia's earlier surveys but from those of the Social Weather Stations' and Boots as well. Her figures do not only show her below, having lost many of its major manufacturers such as RCA found Ray Cables and Thomson Electronics, has been unable to generate the industrial output that used to be in Central Luzon.

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to be less popular than the other candidates, they share low to be downright unpopular. Mr. Gonzalez is excitedly during his lectures at the business some weeks ago. There in no clear path for anyone to take because there is a clear path for someone from Malacañang.

There are many reasons for that unpopularity. The most patent is the mess this country has gotten into over the last half year alone. A couple of weeks ago, I spoke in several campuses, and without exception and of the students many of them are first time voters—expressed alarm at what was happening in the country. That in fact was the question they asked, an echo of Emmanuel Pelaez's famous line after he was ambushed during that coup: "What is happening in the country?"

GMA is naturally being blamed for the mess, whether by omission if the sign on the door says, "The President is out—campaigning") or commission (Pelaf, Fiasco, the Davide impeachment). The President wears her ambition too brightly up her sleeve, and that can be a kiss of death. The campaign of candidates that has lasted hardly since the early '90s has been the wages, and most people define wages essentially as interests who crimes power to ladly be, or else would bargain on the devil himself he is.

That a scale GMA has played from the start, and in the process has been diminishing with us. She was booed at the M.V. Hendy Music concert a couple of weeks ago. What's nothing compared to the reception she got at a school in Tacloban City, where scandalously made staff heard while she was speaking in the heights of mediocrity. Erap's exile in the land were he remains unwelcome is punishment.

Ramon Mitra and Jose de Venecia are hardly in the last two presidential elections precisely because they were seen as that—who else does, Angie asks, repo. Like GMA, they had the strongest party organization and resources. They were the equivalents of the incumbent. Both coined monetary leading e. House whose members would sign anything, even toilet paper. Both spent lavishly but couldn't parody.

Like GMA. (To be continued)

FPJ should have sent Angara to PCCI

LISTENING to Raul Roco over the radio as he roused up a huge crowd of supporters at the Folk Arts Theater yesterday, I felt his speech was strange. Roco. It was full of showmanship to be urged his kababayan to vote ("Iboto ninyo ako!") and his colleagues to "Lumaguing hindi ako nalong"), playing on the line of cry of Andres Bonifacio. Roco is a good speaker and an effective communicator, especially since he mostly always speaks in Filipino, which is why he reminded me of his colleagues' mastery in this when he was heading Ambassador Francis Escudero. But more than anything, he has that gift of making people feel good about himself as he consistently harps about the good old Filipino virtues and seeks to revive the Roco's faith in himself. His campaign line, "KISS," capitalizes on it.

Roco's problem, however, is still keen to one, since the voters—and the financiers—that he has what it takes to translate his vast popularity into votes; this uncertainty could affect the flow of funds (terribly critical to a presidential campaign). Surveys on surveys show that Roco still remains popular, that popularity has been going down. His problem is how to convert it, just how not to peak too early, which his campaign fear. Note that the recent Pulse Asia survey published a few days ago, among others, that showed Roco at 30 percent, closely followed by Fernando for Jr. and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo at 28 percent each; but Roco's rating is down from a previous high, whereas GMA's rating has been climbing steadily from very low.

* * *

At Senate President Franklin Drilon's 48th birthday celebration last Friday evening, Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry leader Miguel Varela told me that the PCCI was not impressed by UNIDO's address before their ranks that day, and in fact, the members gave her a standing ovation. From accounts, the PCCI was also impressed by Roco. Its victory over the highly vaunted world businessweight king Marcos associate Siemens has put Gordon in the world map once again. It was also a welcome respite, although momentary, from the scandals and political knots brought by the unruly members of the opposition.

My townmates, including children, lined up the streets and cheered as Pacquiao's entourage zoomed from the airport to City Hall where a fiesta celebration awaited him. There was a grand welcoming tribute for the "people's champion," Pacquiao's Sun. 10 victory over the highly rated world featherweight king Marco Antonio Barrera has put Gentri in the world map once again. It was also a welcome respite, although momentary, from the scandals and political knots brought by the unruly members of the opposition.

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POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

power and rather the reports say the business leaders were upset that FPJ was a no show—not letter by stage fright, don, but indisposed. What aggravated it was that FPJ sent Sen. Nicanor Soliman to read a four-page message from him, when it would have been better if he sent Sen. Edgardo Angara to answer the businessmen's queries about his program and ease their anxieties a bit. After all, FPJ couldn't have gotten his LDP buddies blowing without Angara. And if he indisposed, Angara would be the one to pieces behind him.

* * *

Like the rest of the world, I was tantalized with the President Bush's hotel act in speaking to the armed services and secretly to Baghdad's Airport, where he spent Thanksgiving with the US troops. It was a clever propaganda play which stymied the US political opposition—how can one argue against spending time with the troops on the Thanksgiving first even for just two and a half hours? In Democratic presidential aspirant Joseph Lieberman put it, "in this issue, we're not Democrats or Republicans, we are just Americans." Sen. Joe Biden's challenging: propaganda to keep the attention top secret, even to the point of not disclosing it even to Bush's parents, my first thought was, could we ever keep such a secret in this country where there are no secrets? The hundreds of journalists who joined Bush was sworn to secrecy and obviously it was respected. Could that happen here?

* * *

Time equally-something were the names of Sen. Hillary Clinton, seen to be a leading Democratic contender. While Bush was trooping the troops to a turkey dinner in Baghdad she was visiting the US troops in nearby Afghanistan, and one day after his visit, she threw up in Baghdad, too. But the difference was that unlike Bush, Hillary didn't stay in a tightly-secured place—she also visited the US troops in their camps. Meaning, she exposed herself to bigger danger and had no qualms about it. She keeps dropping clues for 2008, but with these many moves, who'll believe her?

* * *

Eighty-nine-year-old Fr. Benny Tria, the founder of the Tria Foundation that has kept legions of very poor Filipino schoolchildren in school, instead of becoming dropout statistics, had an accident in a Pentagon room near the Greenhouse where he had lived for 13 years. While on his annual begging mission for Tria, he fell to the house of his host while hurrying to an appointment, and the brain scan showed a skull fracture which necessitated some intensive treatment at a hospital. A teapot came behind from the brain. As a result, he has been forced to take some weeks' rest, which is rather difficult for this saintly priest, who's often called our "Padre Stalker Xavier," (unlike Fr. Tria's relentless begging for funds) and he has so many friends and admirers there.

While on a stopover in Frankfurt, Germany, en route to Manila the other week, I was able to chat on the phone with Anita Sciascia, a Filipina married to a Swiss and a longtime friend, who founded and chairs Kinderhilfe Philippines, a valuable NGO support group for Tria in Germany. Anita lives in Saarbrücken, about 30 minutes from where Fr. Tria is now convalescing. In a whole session I had with her, in the course of a casual conversation, she found that he is "as talkative as ever," though he now talks about "learning a lesson about slowing down at last." (Earlier Anita was only praising Fr. Tria's work, but his 6 hours, even at age 89. She said that an award from the "Steuern Foundation for Children in Need" awards Fr. Tria for his humanitarian endeavors: the gala award night would have been on Nov. 29 but I last Sept. 5, for the visit accident. Meantime, his legions of admirers are thankful to God he was the way he fall recovery.

The boys from Dadiangas

THE ILOILO[illegible] multitude that greeted the homecoming of boxing icon Manny Pacquiao last Thursday in General Santos City capped the weeklong tribute for the "people's champion," Pacquiao's Sun. 10 victory over the highly rated world featherweight king Marco Antonio Barrera has put Gentri in the world map once again. It was also a welcome respite, although momentary, from the scandals and political knots brought by the unruly members of the opposition.

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KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Carlos Isagani T. Zarate

pugilism at that time—Romulo Navarrete and Andy Balaba—who were in separate undercard fights of the main event.

My former is an entrepreneur hailing allegedly from Davao after being promoted to that boxing is a royal sport, then and now he will not let an occasion pass—either by watching a live boxing event or on television—to root for his favorite boxer. When he gave me those gloves, he told me to put through that he always wish to see a boxing arena a boxing in boxing, but since how from Dadiangas (the first emerging hotbed of amateur and professional boxers) were into the sport, my father prodded me to learn a punch or two, so defend myself in a brawl just in case. Indeed, boxing had become very popular in the city at that time that boxing clubs sprouted. Boxing's popularity was augured the establishment in Dadiangas of Mandaluyo's first ever modern and big stadium, then called the Bonifacio Stadium, to accommodate the growing number of fights staged in the city.

December, since the "Thrilla in Manila," Gentian saw the other number two of many of its favorite sons. In 1981, Saturnino, dubbed as the "Real Thing" for his resemblance to fame Coca-Cola boxer replaced Rafael "Barredor" Limon who withdrew at the last minute of his fight with Africa-based champion Cornelius Boza Edwards. The "replacement" proved to be a blessing in disguise for Saturnino who won the world title in World Boxing Council super featherweight crown from Edwards via a third round knockout.

From that victory, it seemed there was no stop-

ping the fame and glory of Saturnino. He successfully defended his title twice, only to be stopped by career nemesis and ex-stablemate Bonito. He was defeated via TKO by the man he replaced when he won the crown: Bonito Limon. His wife left him; he was convicted and served a jail term in connection for rape; he became an alcoholic; deserted by once loyal and kind fans.

All that is left of his fame and fortune now are laurels and memories of his past glory and an unfinished gym where he planned to train future boxing champions. He may have learned some lessons but even Saturnino knows that he is now only a shadow of his former self.

Like Saturnino, Rodolfo Boie, a mauvest to wilds Balaba. In 1982, Balaba died of brain injuries he got in a fight with a former boxer.

Despite the sad fate that has befallen former idols and Balaba, many budding boys from Bulacan still dream of one day being lionized by their countrymen. Among these are Bernie Tacoy (#80) Junior Bantamweight champion), Abney Gordon (#80) Bantamweight champion) and Carlos Rodrigo (#80) Flyweight champion).

Last Thursday, among the happy well-wishers of Pacquiao was his six-year-old kid Steaxxerie. When they posed for the camera, the teenaged boxer-in-the-making showed his prowess in raising hideout and retired champion against a young, still raging champion. Apparently, the young was not lost on the 26-year-old Pacquiao. He reportedly announced his plans to retire by the age of 30 to spend more time with his family. He would be his life trip from his fingers, the way it was with his boyhood idol. Pacquiao lifted the expectations of many poor young boys from Dadiangas and elsewhere who are willing to commit their lives to the uncertain future in boxing. He must not let them down.

* * *

Comments or facts: c270@hotmail.com or lar_lizer@yahoo.com

Brouhaha over Kris' choice for president

WE DIE is a short five against that when she talks about something that is outside of her field of expertise, entertainment, she lands on the front page of the business or other newspapers!

Two months ago, it's bragged the headlines with her enemies that Pandakaw City Mayor Amy Marquez pulled a gun on her when they had a lovers' quarrel and that he had invited her with a set.

Luckily unidentified threat. Two months ago, Kris's ex-husband Pacquiao's entourage to the country.

READERS' ADVOCATE

Raul J. Palabrica

All that drama came to roughly here were when she with Amy Marquez complaint she filed against Marquez after the latter declared on nationwide television that he did not call her a liar and he apologized for whatever hurts he may have caused her.

The basement's coverage of it-Kris' love affairs came under fire from many readers. They disapproved of the front page treatment given to the issue and the use of headlines of the two "liar and tell" personalities. The readers felt the newspaper acted like a tabloid in its coverage of that scandal.

Last week, history repeated itself in the Nov. 22 and 23 issues of the business. The banner of the first edition of the Nov. 22 issue read: "Kris goes for opposition." The accompanying story revealed her alleged decision to support the presidential candidate of the opposition in the 2004 election. A photo of Kris and Sen. Serafin Lacson leaving the restaurant where that endorsement was supposedly hatched occupied almost half of the front page.

Incidentally, in the final edition of that issue, the banner was changed to the more quiet, pro-Gibi" referring to the resignation of Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho from the Cabinet the day before for personal reasons. The news about Kris' endorsement of the opposition's presidential candidate played second fiddle to the Camacho story. Nonetheless, the photo of Kris and Lacson remained in its original place on the front page.

Complaint

On Nov. 23, the business's banner read: "Kris Gibi have to decide." The follow-up story carried, among other items, the denial of the matter report that she was supporting Fernando Nor. K. or any opposition candidate in next May's polls.

The complaint: publication of the alleged support coverage of the Kris-Jose scandal pale in comparison to what I got on the report that Kris plans to back the opposition in 2004. The e-mail and letters (some were written in Filipino) expressed strong dissatisfaction with the way the business played up her alleged choice for the top post of the land.

Jennifer Lopez wrote: "Why did you put Kris Aquino on your front page for two days in a row? Who cares who will be her presidential candidate? I would understand if it's Cory Aquino, but Kris? Who is she anyway? She cannot even string her words together without committing grammatical errors. Please stop her life, its what boarding or teapot will she have on the choice of candidate on the Filipino nation?"

Grade six boy Hector commented that Kris "is having trouble managing her own life, how can she manage a nation? It is important that people should know who she will support? If she tries to re-pet her in trouble with her family again, I think you are succeeding. Can't you see even Lacson wants to run her just so how did?" Why not leave her alone?

Marlene Dimaculangan said "Kris Aquino barks at and on. She has the opposition, NO, NO CANDIDATE!!! Suddenly her political opinions are worthy of front page headlines? Ridiculous. As a reader, I feel seriously insulted. Seems like this paper is having support for its audience. Decide up because, this may not look like a tabloid, but you're starving in road like one."

Story value

I learned that the reason Kris was given premium treatment on those two days was because the editorial staff felt her endorsement of the opposition had strong news value. Considering her parentage and political lineage, Kris may be considered a public figure whose statements and actions often make the headlines.

Besides, her action appeared to put her on a collision course with her mother, former President Cory Aquino, who had been very supportive of President Macapagal-Arroyo to the extent that Kris let her administration family. Also, Kris' only brother, Sen. Benigno Aquino, has announced several times in the past that he is in favor of the Macapagal's endorsement.

On the other hand, the Nov. 23 banner was meant to be a follow-up story to the previous day's report on Kris' plan to go for the opposition's presidential candidate in the 2004 polls. This time, the focus was on her denial of her tilt toward the opposition and her brother's expression of dismay for that reported action.

After knowing the circumstances behind the two banner stories complained about, I can reminded of an article I read somewhere about the difference between news that people need to know and news that people want to know. The "need to read" news includes those that affect the lives of many or the people's work, wages, family and other important necessities of life. To the "want to read" category belongs news about sex, intrigue, entertainment and those that seek to subvert the people's attention from their daily problems.

Questionable value

I am sympathetic to the views of the readers who questioned the wisdom of the business giving Kris' alleged political preference in the 2004 elections glaring front page treatment. By doing that, the newspaper gave the public the impression that Kris is a "kingmaker" of sorts whose blessings could spell the difference between victory and defeat in the polls.

While Kris enjoys some degree of popularity because of her TV shows and entertaining escapades, she has not established herself as somebody who can draw votes for or against political candidates. She has not participated in any political exercise that would have tested her vote-getting capacity. All she has going for her are a pretty face, glib tongue and the benefit of being the daughter of former presidents and a martyr.

Whatever credibility or influence she may have had were some people of voting age was seriously eroded when she made a big fuss about her plan to punish her former lover (still?) lover Mayor Amy Marquez for threatening her with a gun. Kris has yet to apologize for the same but she says with a public apology. The sudden turnaround, to the public's dismay, exposed the true depth of her morality and sincerity.

* * *

In my opinion, the story in question should have been played, if at all, in the entertainment or lifestyle section, not on the front page.

* * *

The readers' advocate may be reached at the following address: "The Readers' Advocate" c/o Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue corner Ayala and Alabang-Zapote, Makati City. Or through fax nos. 897-8783 to 89, or reader-advocate@inquirer.com.ph.

Panday versus Pidal and Paguia's jigsaw puzzle

COMMENTARY

Doyo Jorge Bocobo

ILOILO[illegible]. To meet the wrath of A, away from B, and to C, I journey a vanished opportunity. (Thanks to Sheryl's Dictionary by masterstrokes stolen from Bocobo).

Having killed speculatively at plunder and pig may to meet talented practitioners, Joseph "Erap" Estrada is coming to jail with his humble pleas. He may not really be that to the movie pals of Lito "Cheto" Shapon, but President Macapagal-Arroyo-led many of the heroes of Edsa II as the glittering civil society affair. The gang statesman Jose de Venecia, unfettered "all the way" to the presidency, has always made no bones about his "Estrada camp" days.

But a ruined king and hard on the parade the very next Wednesday. "When" you become President of the Philippines, will you pardon Joseph Ejercito Estrada? asked Sen. Pete Wilson. To which the Senate President Franklin Drilon answered, "I'm not in a position to comment or to take a position."

Yet, whatever wins the 2004 election decides to be, I predict it wants to pursue the first three anti-money laundering cases filed by Estrada's predecessor Gloria E. Who will deny that Jose Jr. (Estrada's civil society) has been matched in corruption by Jose Pidal's civil society? The only difference is that one of them allegedly has the presidential seizure in his pocket now.

Which is why, I've been spending my time in the close company of Supreme Court Justices Conchita Carpio-Morales (Francisco A. vs. Hopkins) and Antonio Eduardo Nachura (Estrada vs. Desierto) in their jousts to transforming the judiciary into a pressing ground for moralistic theories about extraordinary governments that are beyond the pale of what is fit for the survival of democracy, for the people, their rights, consolidation, regeneration of national virtue, for justices have absolved themselves of possible culpable decelerations with their own gavels. They have overthrown one presidency and corrected the House with three holy swords.

As a result, I am fascinated by such incantations that change the course of the real world. In a writer, nothing is advisor the art of explanation. I practice the science of overhearing the "thinking sounds" that such authors make in the studies of their writing. I measure the sometimes smallness of their breathing against my own. And all of this great verities flows over read and known.

Who are the greatest writers? In my humble opinion, one is Shakespeare, the highbrow noble woman who 4,000 years ago created the characters "Islands of the Pentacosts and Founded the Judeo-Christian Muslim" tradition with the mighty power of her quill. William Shakespeare, whatever his really was, makes "backstory" to legends. Thomas Jefferson, the highest American statesman, nonetheless complexes any thesis (as with the recommencement theses, Jose Rizal, scientist and visionary.)

Landmark Supreme Court rulings form a distinctive genre of writing that is a subject of the re-writers. I have found it useful to think of each ruling as a giant jigsaw puzzle which the justices assemble from all the other facts and laws involved—then a person emerges that justifies the decision. "Presidency."

But unlike jigsaw puzzles, the full picture of re-assessment like Edsa I successfully change with a single missing piece or fact. It's more like a whodunit where the solution can change because of a single clue, a method that to the chagrin of Sherlock Holmes.

Alan Paguia has been vindictively and most unfairly suspended from the practice of the law for the Supreme Court, in my opinion, because he was the first to find a missing piece of the puzzle that blows up Estrada to Aesops as a fatally flawed ruling. Not because it is wrong about the morality of Estrada, but because it deliberately ignored the serious role as prosecutor that the justices themselves played in the very case they were judging.

But the court should really have suspended Antonio Trillanes IV, who revealed Paguia's missing piece to people like me who never heard Paguia before. The missing piece is a key written by now Justice Antonio Carpio which had been withheld from the Vice President's camp by Chief Justice Hilario Davide at the insistence of Justice Carpio. Carpio and Davide are the justices in the drafting the presidency recent on Jan. 20, 2001. Gloria even denied the writer such a far-fetching key was permanently disabled when he was not. The ruling foisted on Arroyo is pure evil because Carpio and Davide are Presidents to March and April were not. Arroyo is not a usurper. She is the victim of the justices themselves played in the very case they were judging.

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To remember Johnny Frivaldo

VLADIMIR Ramos S. Frivaldo, legislative staff officer, and Ginalyn Amanda S. Frivaldo, staff of staff in the Office of Rep. Juan G. Frivaldo—are trying to write the memoirs of their grandfather, fondly called "Tata Chenot" by his friends and constituents. This is the first serious attempt to write about the life and exploits of the popular governor.

A member has launched Governor G. Frivaldo T-shirt will be given! I need member-size—because they are having these made sa...

ing their government salaries to fund the endeavor) so anyone who would provide pictures with caption (if at all possible, stating the place, date and persons in the picture) or write about their remembrances of Tata Frivaldo is a section to be called "I Remember Gov. Juan G. Frivaldo, The Last American Governor."

The final draft of the memoir—Dan Tata Onsoy never joined! was among several valuable books, plaques, trophies and awards that were gained by the late in 2002 that saved his old house in Manila.

By helping us, more will be able to read and relive anecdotes about the Philippines' longest-serving governor in our coming book. He died as the St. Peter and Paul Hospital, an unknown hospital in Baloga, Sorsogon. He was buried in a lot he himself graveyard in his hometown.

Please mail your letters or pictures with your return address to Vladimir Ramos S. Frivaldo, 15 Granite Rd., Pilar Village, 1770 Las Piñas City, e-mail: vladimir_frivaldo@yahoo.com.

Potholes filled, now for the lights

THAT is an unnecessary waste after less than a month of the road was dug up by DPWH Bonifacio Engineering District, upon receipt of the complaints, has either inadequately maintained an earlier supervision and resurfaced with select DPWH officials to solve the problem, the Oct. 27, the maintenance crew conducted asphalt patching on the potholes along Bonifacio Drive right in front of Colonel Ramon Farces in Pembrook Quezon Avenue (both North and South-bound).

—JENNIFER B. PUNSALAN,
officer in charge,
Public Information Division,
Office of the Secretary,
Department of Public Works
and Highways, Manila

LETTERS

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Hannah and I would welcome any suggestions, comments, additions and information that any reader may wish to share with us.

To all our dear friends, Pls write/say us reply galore!

—FLORDELIZA GARCIA-
P. PRINCELLOS
1314 Granite Rd., Pilar Village,
1740 Las Piñas City

PMAP is entirely different from PMAP

AS I was reading the business last June 8, as I always do in the morning, the photo on the front page caught my attention. It showed some members of the People's Movement Against Poverty marching by a caption below the photo which read, "Flaming Rage. The rage of protesters belonging to about 20 organizations, including the PMAP and the Philippine Fourteen Revolutionary Movement, march up and down Ayala Avenue in Makati City, blaming alleged ex-President Marcos and Chief Justice Davide, they demanded the resignation of the former and the impeachment of the latter." Incorrectly, in the following day's issue of the INQUIRER, there was no mention of the PMAP.

I would like to believe that the acronym "PMAP" was used simply to fit the limited space, however, the effect of using the same acronym as our association, brings some confusion before the public. Some of our members have complained that their respective companies have been receiving letters from various religious groups who use same acronym as ours. Confusion is involved in political activities. Of course, we always endeavor to say clear that the PMAP being referred to is different from our own.

I am confident that with your previous publicity with our association, you have always regarded us as responsible members of our profession. Since the time the first annual Management Association of the Philippines (PMAP) was established in 1956, we have always tried and continue to try our best to elevate the list of professionalism in the field of Human Resource Management. In fact, our association is the newest brother that Dr. carries and Exchange Commission.

It is said, if other old these efforts, we will be labeled and misconstrued that we are the members who have been involved in violent political activities as mentioned in the papers every now and then. While we try to spare the rights of the members of the People's Movement Against Poverty to be involved in political activities, we hope that we could be old. Personnel Management are two different organizations with objectives. Although we condone to explain, that we are a different group, the acronym confuses the public no end.

In the light of the above, may we request your assistance in correcting the misimpression that our Finance brought about by the use of this same acronym. The Inquirer's editorial staff can differentiate at its specific articles with the full name of the organization whenever there is a need to you in so press.

—ELMER V. REMOTA,
president,
Personnel Management
Association
of the Philippines,
PMAP Center,
670 Lee St.,
addition Hills,
Mandaluyong City

CDCP engineers built San Juanico Bridge

I WISH to bring to your attention an article published in the business columns section last Oct. 27.

The headline on Page C5, read, "Innovative ing Pedro Bayle, builder of bridges and bears" and on the side "The builder of San Juanico Bridge was a world-class engineer..."

I have gone over the article and found no specific explanation as to how he designed and built San Juanico Bridge.

Records will show that in 1966-69, the then Bureau of Public Highways called for bids to undertake the "design, construction and financing" of the said bridge project. The Construction and Development Corp. of the Philippines (CDCP) (now renamed Philippine Infrastructure Construction Corp), LPW-211 was awarded the contract.

As the president of CDCP then, our design and engineering staff, together with Japanese engineers, undertook a detailed survey, study and analysis of the site and from that data proceeded to design the bridge as to new stands. I do not remember having to see engineer the person of "Pedro Bayle."

I am sure the Inquirer stands for truth in its publications and would not allow the printing of biased and erroneous information.

—ABIGAIL M. ESTOCA,
Perigon Building, Ayala Ave.,
Bonifacio, Makati City

A 'plant bamboo' national project

I WOULD like to suggest that Congress pass a law that will require the 79 provinces and 1,496 municipalities throughout the country to set aside at least a hectare or small lot devoted to bamboo. Each provincial/municipal local executive/s must require the planting of bamboo trees. This should be a top priority of the government because of the many advantages that bamboo offers.

Aside from adding beauty to the landscape, bamboo can also prevent soil erosion especially when planted on riverbanks. On top of these, bamboo provides us with food (shoots or lubong), building materials for houses and materials for handicrafts and furniture. Bamboo is very important to the growth of our economy as shown by the experience of China which earned US$360 million (P19 billion) in export earnings from canned bamboo shoots and handicrafts.

Hence, in the Chinese, bamboo has always been called "green gold" over the centuries.

—DAVID SIGNEY,
MBLA Court, Waterdrive,
Madrigal City 1800

If you have any complaints, grievances or suggestions about the performance of some establishment or the inquirer, you may write to the Readers' Advocate, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, City of Makati or send a fax to Nos. 897-4761, 897-4954, or e-mail readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph.

Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

[author block]

Across the NATION

Assistant Editor Tony Burgonio

[author block]

Dentist, nephew freed from captors

BAGUIO politicians review the Grand Cordon in store for the end of the 19th Philippine Advertising Congress. His delegation showed up in sandals, however.

ZAMBOANGA CITY—After more than two months in captivity, a dentist and his nephew were freed from their captors after an encounter in Parang, Sulu on Saturday night.

Brig. General Alexander Yano, 1,000 army Brigade chief, said the rescued victims, Dr. Ramon Lee and his nephew Jesse Regan Rubio, looked "haggard, pasty, dirty and very tired when we got them after the encounter."

Lee and Rubio were rescued shortly before midnight of Saturday in Barangay Lagasan in Parang. They were kidnapped on June 8 from their hometown of Jolo on Sept. 7.

Prior to the rescue, Lee's relatives reportedly negotiated for the payment of ransom.

Brig. General Roberto Ulayan, 3rd Marine Brigade commander, said that based on intelligence information, the kidnappers were demanding P15 million in ransom.

"But with the encounter that lasted for about 15 minutes, I don't think there was ransom paid," Yano said.

The rescue succeeded because of the "timely relay of information from our reliable informant," he said.

Yano said the seven suspects, all by a certain Kumar Asali, were wounded in the encounter. He said it was impossible for the soldiers to recover the victims if the kidnappers did not suffer any casualty.

The victims were still undergoing physical check-up at the Camp Navarro General Hospital inside the Southern Command headquarters here.

They were airlifted from Jolo to this city at around 8 a.m. yesterday. Joelle S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau

7,000 workers in Negros want ID scrapped

ABOUT 7,000 Negrenses went to the streets in Bacolod City to commemorate the 20th death anniversary of national hero Ninoy Aquino.

About 2,000 protesters participated in the rally spearheaded by Bagong Alyansang Makabayan in front of the Bacolod City Hall.

At least 5,000 people were in the rally initiated by the Sandigan in front of the Welcome Rotonda in the Bacolod Public Plaza.

Both groups vowed to continue the struggle of Bonifacio to uplift the lives of the struggling Filipino people. They also expressed their opposition to the plan of President Macapagal-Arroyo to impose the national identification system.

Mr. Macapagal on Saturday said she was keen on pushing a single national ID system "to deter criminals and terrorists and expedite those of necessary moving and law-abiding citizens."

Bayan-ng Muntinlupa Representative Rep. Rene Magtubo, who spoke during the rally of the Sandigan, said people already had identification cards.

"To curb corruption and criminality to achieve peace and order, government should improve the criminal justice system. The problems cannot be solved by an ID system," Magtubo said.

He said he believed that the national ID system was designed by the government to harass leaders of people's organizations so they could keep their informers here.

Richard Gomez, chair of Bayan-Negros and the Bilibong Ilog Inabakit-ng Filipino-Negros, and incumbent candidate of the Ang Bagong Bayani party-list group, said the ID system would deprive the people of their rights to privacy.

In Columbia City, about 1,500 workers staged a rally to declare their frustrations over the government's policy of globalization.

The workers belonging to the Pambansang Manggagawang Pilipino and Cebuanong Workers Alliance called on them urging for presidency to lay down their agenda for the labor sector. Isodio Rivera, PM head in Southern Tagalog, challenged all "presidentiables" to present solutions to the various problems that affect the working class.

The Cebuanong workers also demanded a wage increase since no wage order for the region was given corresponding to that released in the National Capital Region two years ago. Carlo B. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau and Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI South Luzon Bureau

Iloilo groups want to dispose condom ordinance

By Ma. Diosa Labiros
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—Members of the groups of military women and guest relation officers here want to scrap the city's condom ordinance that aims to combat the possible rash of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV/AIDS.

Gabriela and the GROs said the ordinance, which targets a 100 percent condom use in all entertainment establishments, violates their business rights.

Gabriela recently staged a picket at city hall while the group composed of GROs working at a budding entertainment center in the city said they would take legal action.

Ordinance No. 2000-237, otherwise known as the 100 percent Condom Use Ordinance, requires owners of entertainment establishments to display and make available condoms for their clients and workers. It also requires owners to encourage entertainers to carry condoms and help enhance customers' love to use them.

Sex workers have to submit themselves to medical check-up every week. Establishments found violating the ordinance would be fined from P1,000 to P3,000 or temporarily closed down up to 15 days.

In a statement, Gabriela Party described the ordinance to "anti-women, oppressive and discriminatory" as it treats all women working in entertainment establishments as commercial sex workers and prostitutes. Aside from carrying condoms, they have to undergo a weekly medical check-up that would cost them P100.

The P400 fee for monthly medical check up is already captious to "a half-sack of rice or at least two large cans of sardines or baby's milk," Gabriela said.

Gabriela said the city government should instead address poverty and lack of jobs as the main reason why women engaged in prostitution.

The GROs' lawyer, Homero Gerochi, said the ordinance violates the national laws and international rights of his clients working at the Handpipers ETV and Manik Lounge.

Gerochi said Handpipers ETV "does not engage in prostitution business," and the ordinance illegally pressures that it is so.

He said his clients are being "classified and given the stigma of being prostitutes, when they are not."

Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Treñas said he would continue to implement the ordinance because the STI and HIV/AIDS are public health safety and public health issues, and the use of condoms is a way of preventing their spread.

"If you have a condom in your wallet it does not mean that you will use it, or you engage in sex trade," said Treñas.

Treñas said GROs could go to court if they want the weekly medical check-up scrapped.

The condom ordinance was created last year as a result of strong lobby of some women's groups here like the Rafuldaw Reproductive Health Center and Process Foundation that give free medical services to commercial sex workers (CSWs).

Other women's groups supported the hundred percent condom use ordinance but wanted the mandatory testing of CSWs for sexually transmitted diseases scrapped. Members of Liguid, the regional gender resource center based at the University of the Philippines Visayas, said the testing is unfair for CSWs because their clients were also not tested for STIs.

Supporters of the ordinance said that the ordinance would prevent the possible rise of STI cases in the city. They said there is also a boom in entertainment focus in Iloilo City

Albay folk slam NPA executions

LEGAZPI CITY—At least 200 families, mostly with relatives who were victims of New People's Army (NPA) guerrillas, joined a rally led by the Bikolnon Kristyano Kongresonan (BKK) on Friday at the Peñaranda Park here, denouncing the abuse and killing of innocent civilians and several others.

"CPP-NPA rebel at bayan," "CPP-NPA pervirtue in mamamayan" and "CPP-NPA demonyo," were written on their placards.

Lauren Eduardo Bagacay-ares, BKK president, said their rally aimed to condemn the inhumane acts of the communist rebels towards fellow Filipinos, including non-combatant military men.

In just two months, NPA rebels have killed three non-combatant military men, he said. One was a medic while the other was a member of the medical team based in the 901st Infantry Brigade based in Camp Villaflores in Barangay Albay, he added.

The recent victim was Lt/Sgt. Jasmin Tesdac of the 22nd Infantry Battalion based in Tuba-Tuba, Ligao City, who he said was a member of a military medical mission team.

Tesdac was abducted on Wednesday last week in Barangay Manoyo in Guinobatan town and was killed later as confirmed by Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal, spokesperson of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

Tesdac's wife Wilma and her four-year-old adopted child pleaded in the NPA to tell her where she could find the body of her husband, if he is really already dead.

Impressions said that with the abduction of Tesdac, the NPA violated the international agreement of leaving minors and even involving them in the kidnapping. He said the NPA gave the 45-caliber of Tesdac to continue after the abduction.

"If they can't give us no indication that Tesdac is dead, it means the NPAs are liars and Ka Roger Rosal is an incompetent leader because he does not know what his subordinates are doing," said Bagacay-ares.

In Zamboanga, two suspected Abu Sayyaf army rebels were killed in a clash with army soldiers on Friday. Two other rebels and five soldiers from the 26th Infantry Battalion were also wounded in the 20-minute encounter that broke out at past 6 a.m. in Maimbung town, according to Lt. Col. Florino Mosca, information officer of the Army's Northern Luzon Command. Mosca did not identify slain rebels and other casualties in the firefight. He said about 40 NPA rebels engaged soldiers and Tabiabolo policemen in the firefight in Barangay Sta. Nila, Maimbung. Government troops reported seizing a shotgun and a .22 cal. in the encounter site. Michael Aragon, *PDI Southern Luzon Bureau and Zenaida Grejao, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

ROUNDUP

Bishop to look into killings

CEBU CITY—Cebu Archbishop Fernando Capalla said he was willing to look into the city's unsolved vigilante-related killings this year that have reached 76. He said the killings have become very alarming and there was no way to stop this but through a dialogue with members of the vigilante group Cebu Anti-Crime Squad (CACS), which he was willing to talk with. Capalla said he felt members had for would keep their identities confidential. He said it was important to know the background of those vigilante members and find out reasons in killing suspected criminals, mostly those involved in illegal drugs. The bishop said no one has the right to just condemn the vigilantes, citing the Church's teaching of forgiveness and reconciliation. "We are only humans and we have no reason that we can't forgive," he said.

Anthony Alfaro, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Caroling by cops banned

CAMP VICENTE LIM, Laguna—Carolling in security agencies and other business firms, requesting for donations and gifts for their Christmas parties and selling raffle tickets and other fund-raising activities have been banned in the Calabarzon area. Regional police director Chief Supt. Jaime Caringal last week said the order aims to halt tainting "the dignity of the police as a professional public servant and discrediting the impression and/or that members of the Philippine National Police are using their position for personal gains." He said the order came from PNP chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. to curb graft and corrupt practices among police ranks. Erring police officials would be subjected to administrative sanctions, he warned.

Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Typhoid kills 1, downs 50

IBAJAY, Aklan—A patient from outbreak in an island village of Ibajay town has killed its barangay captain and at least 50 villagers in a hospital in Tabon-Tabon City since Nov. 20. Dr. Veronica Mirabel, Ibajay Health Office chief, said Aldano Lorenzana of Sitio Santicon, Barangay Salvacion town was declared dead at the Aklan Regional Training and Teaching Hospital (ARTTH) in Lezo on Nov. 25. The victim, aged 51 and his 10 years old, showed symptoms of typhoid fever like on and off fever, chills and vomiting. Mayor Herminio Mirabel has ordered the health unit to conduct water test in the village where the outbreak hit and control of the patients by providing them with chlorine-treated medicines. The town council has passed a resolution declaring the town under state of calamity.

Joel Dolar, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Cop officer shot dead

LUMBIA, Zamboanga—A police officer was shot and killed after meeting a friend in this town. SPO4 Nasato Dimaunahan, 40, was killed on the spot when two unidentified armed men shot him at the back of his head near several drums while he was watching horse race from Barangay Magcalape of this town at 4 p.m., Nov. 25. Dimaunahan, who was chief of Bayan police Intelligence division, had been getting threats from drug mega crime syndicate he was able to put in jail. Lumbia police said the victim was shot while reading his mentor's last will. After shooting Dimaunahan, one of the suspects took the firearms and left the crime scene in a hurry.

Mel Magsino, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

P10M fire damage

BALINGOG, Davao del Norte—A fire razed the Malanog commercial center here at 4 p.m., Monday, burning down some 15 business stalls and seven residential houses. A police report said the fire which lasted more than nine hours and caused an estimated P10-million damage, was believed to have originated from the residence of one Nida Pinuela, and caused by a burning candle left unattended. It was put out by the Bureau of Fire Protection units from the municipalities of Kapalong, Braulio Dujali and Santo Tomas, while the Malanog police provided security to the area. No casualty was reported.

Enin Ganza, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Smashup hurts 6

LUCENA CITY—The "killer road" along the Maharlika highway here, yesterday posted its second fatality of multiple-vehicle crash as five persons died and six people injured, two of them in serious condition. Police said an unidentified 6-wheeler cargo truck driven by Alberto Bosoy, of Abuyog, Leyte, was traversing the descending area of Sto. Niño Bay here at the probable cause of the accident when it bumped the passenger jeepney traveling ahead. Due to the fast speed, the cargo truck also hit seven more vehicles that included three more passenger jeepneys, two motorcycle-trailers, a Hyundai Grace van and a Mitsubishi Lancer before it finally stopped after hitting a concrete electric post and a residential house along the side of the road. The driver of the first passenger jeepney and the cargo truck helper were both in critical conditions and were confined at the nearby Lucena Unified Doctors Hospital. All vehicles suffered heavy damages, according to the report. Initial police investigation revealed that the cargo truck lost its brakes. Two weeks ago at least 20 persons, mostly students, were also injured when another cargo vehicle lost its brakes and rammed through three passenger jeeps.

Cielito Matias Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

GMA plays Santa to 150 squatters

LUCENA CITY—For at least 150 squatter families in this city the occasion was a Christmas dream that finally came true.

On Thursday, President Macapagal-Arroyo distributed at least 150 Certificates of Entitlement for Lot Allocation to the first batch of urban poor (but have long been residing in) two parcels of government-owned land in the outskirts of this city.

The awarding coincided with the Farmer's Forum on Agrarian Reform held Thursday at Centro Pastoral Auditorium in Barangay Isabang.

At least 100 of the lucky informal settlers were members of about 700 families living alongside the vast empty strip of the ceased railway in Barangay Ibabang Iyam, some five to eight km SO from.

The other 50 recipients were members of around 200 families who have been occupying the one-hectare piece of land owned by the Philippine National Railways in Barangay Gulang-Gulang.

Mrs. Macapagal called on the people to continue to support her government.

Rory Wines, president of Unified Leading Urban Poor Associations, a federation of city urban poor associations long residing in the abandoned airport, described the awarding as "a Christmas gift come true."

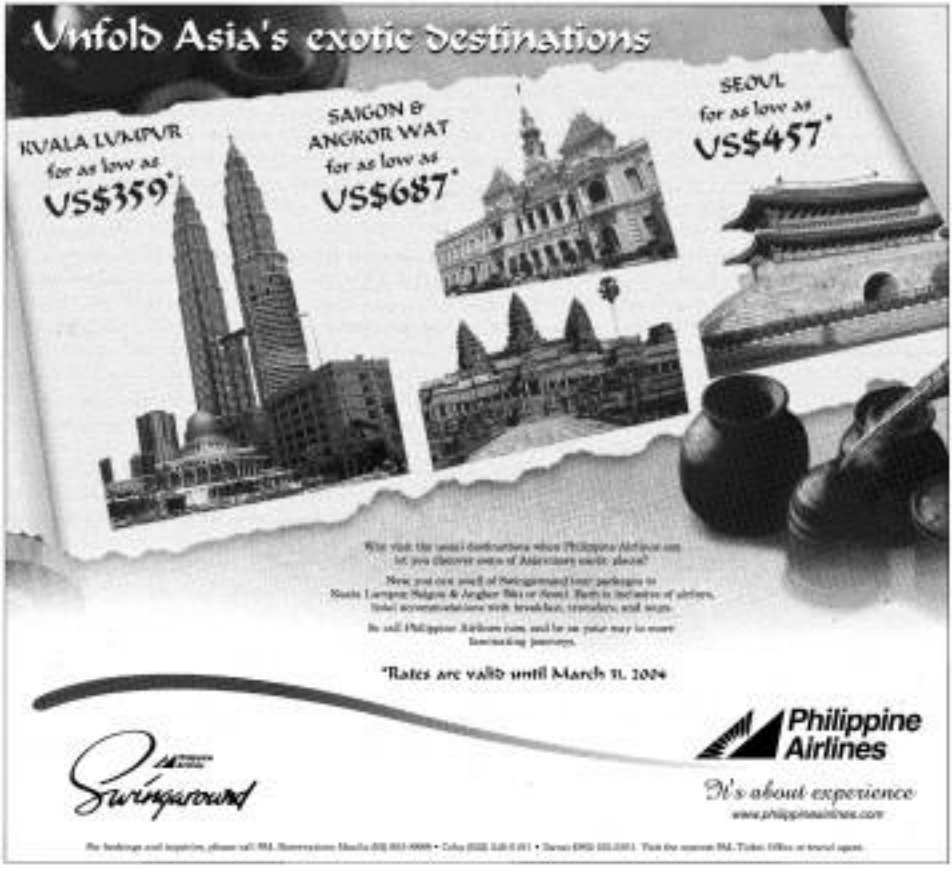
"With God's help, the lot now finally belongs to us, President Macapagal-Arroyo plays real life Santa Claus to us," she told reporters.

Quezon Reps. Aleta Suarez, Lynette Punzalan and Rafael Nantes, Lucena City Mayor Ramon Talaga Jr., Quezon Vice Governor Jessie Talahiug, police and military officials, and other heads of different government agencies met the President.

Wines described the ceremony as the starting point of their renewed peace and contentment. "Batch by batch, the other members of the organization will also receive their own certificates. The officers will be the last to receive."

Zeida Gesa, 53, said she has been residing in the place since 1982.

She said she would just give to her children the 90-square-meter lot granted to her. (With reports from Jerlito Medina Jr., PEI Interns Loren Bayuni)



Roco: Let's change this administration

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"That, a partially capitalized, but I want to be known as the known president, strong and (who) understand as want for the Filipino and Philippines," Roco said.

On Sunday (hours before the crowd), who waved blue and yellow balloons and handkerchiefs, cheers erupted cheering in the May presidential election. "If they will silence, we will charge to Malacañang in representation," he said.

Wearing his trademark floral shirt, Sen. of Aksyon Demokratiko was flanked by his coalition partners Senator de Villa of Reporma and former Cebu Gov. Emilio "Lito" Osmeña of Pwersa.

The three parties have coalesced to field the Aksyon ng Pag-asa (Alliance of Hope).

Roco was also joined on stage by his 81-year-old mother Rosario and wife Trinta.

Despite the lack of glitzy production numbers and show biz personalities, the 5,000-capacity Quirino was overflowing with Roco supporters, including delegations from the provinces. A video especially made by movie director Gil Portes was shown, hyping up Roco's credentials.

Running mate

Contrary to what was expected, the presidential aspirant has running mate nor his senatorial slate.

He just named the 20 "nominees" for his senatorial lineup but for two, Rodolfo Biazon, who recently bolted the opposition Lakas ng Tao (Lakas-NUCD), Pilipino Ito Dela, Mr Macapagal's 1st term vice-mayor and Mayor Oscar Moreno, formerly of the administration party.

Roco said he would announce his slate on Dec. 15, when the filing of certificates of candidacy starts.

Besides De Villa, Roco and Moreno, the senatorial "nominees" who showed up at the proclamation rally were former Solicitor General Frank Chavez, former Bishop "Tatay" Mondoy, broadcaster Jay Sonza, former President Erap's Daughter Jinggoy Estrada, athlete Gloria "Bong" Cua and former telecommunications chief Josephine Limson.

The other senatorial nominees in attendance were former Pasay City Lucita Ocampo, former actor police officer Ramon Magsaysay, former Senator Rep. Emil Ong, former Rep. Rod Ordoñez, Lanao del Sur Vice Mayor Dimapore Ramos and former Isko Rep. Arturo Tolentino.

The nominees who were not present but did not show up were the late Sen. Raul Gonzalez's daughter Pia, former Agriculture Secretary Leonor de Mesa-Verzosa, and TV host Jovic Orbos and Rhoda Mariano.

Roco earlier said Federico Pascual, ex-chair of the Securities and Exchange Commission, was on the list of nominees. But his name was not announced yesterday.

Ex-Friday, Roco told the businessman Bautista, Chavez and Mondoy were sure of being in his lineup.

In an interview prior to the rally, Roco said he was sure he would be invited. He said Chavez brought their own contingent to the proclamation rally.

Gary Ramos (above) acknowledged that her father would be campaigning for the ruling Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats. "I'm grown up. I have my own mind," said Ramos, who used to chair the Philippine Olympics Committee.

She said the Macapagal administration had failed to solve the problems on peace and order and the economy. In fact, there is the best candidate who could bring about change.

But while she accepted the nomination, Ramos-Jalosjos said she had not decided if she was going to run.

Flower power

Some of Roco's male supporters also came dressed in floral shirts. Huge red and white banners bearing a flower and Roco's name hung on the stage of the "Convention of Hope."

The crowd was ready in blue and yellow, the color of Roco's party. Some wore T-shirts with the slogan "Roco: Let's change this administration."

Aksyon Demokratiko party flag-bearer Villa's Reporma also mobilized supporters who came in red shirts.

Roco said his hand sign would be the sign of "I love you."

Roco's supporters gave their opponent The longest was collected by Gordon, who is running for lawmaker, the reason not the opposition not to give any to Roco.

Afterward, Rey Valera sang a special composition. Theater actors Robert Arevalo and Ken Alvarez also sang a number. Theater actress Dolly Marquez served as one of the emcees.

Actor Rowland Roco, a relative of Roco's, and singer Celeste Legaspi were backstage.

Others were at the proclamation rally were former Intelligence Presiding Justice Ricardo Francisco, former Albay Rep. Abel Lagman, Naga City Mayor Jesse Robredo, Catanduan Rep. Edgar Sulit, former Integrated Bar of the Philippines president Arthur Lim and Commission on Human Rights Chair Nini Quisumbing. Quisumbing, daughter of the late president Manuel L. Quezon. With reports from Rona Fajardo and AP

Project puts cops out of extortion's way

Front page A1

the source of "legitimate" income for the lowest ranks making.

Through the Realignment Support Service, the PNP sponsored on Thursday a daylong seminar that taught policemen and their immediate families the business of making business and other Christmas decor.

While the project won't yield fat cash like the usual extortion monies, Senior Supt. Ismael Rafanan, PNP deputy director for operations, said it would provide a more lasting source of livelihood for a regular policeman who earns an average of P12,000 monthly.

"We understand the need of cops for additional income, especially during Christmas," Deputy Rafanan said, chief of the directorate for community relations said.

"But what better way to do this than to help them jump-start their own business and make them and their families self-reliant?"

A total of 150 officers, plus their spouses and other family members, showed up at the Multi-Purpose Hall in Camp Crame to learn the craft straight from the experts. Going by the sheer volume of registrants, the PNP appeared to have succeeded in dragging a handful of cops out of "holiday extortion's way."

Family enterprise

Participants represented almost all of the PNP's support services, such as the Legal Support Service, Health Service, Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, Intelligence Group, Traffic Management Group, Crime Laboratory and the PNP-16 base police.

Spokesmen said the PNP-backed family enterprise is the hope that the police project would succeed to become a "family enterprise" for many of its personnel.

"Our vision is to make the baseline project not only an additional source of livelihood but also the start of a business that would later become a tradition that would support even future generations," he said.

To ensure that the project would not be nipped in the bud, the PNP support several "experts" in family business-making Christmas balangay and of course, bamboo canes and capiz shells.

Classes on how to make scenes of candles, cloud flowers arrangements, and even watch decorations featuring Yuletide symbols, such as the manger (or belen) and angels were handled by three members of the 16th Women Police Office. Reindeer and Christmas bells were making them since the closing for several years now.

Old timers from Valenzuela were said to Pampanga were involved to teach the art of making colorful balangay, Filipino style, the kind that turns the simplest of boxes into instant attractions.

Free materials

After lectures that involved briefly on theories and techniques, participants got the chance to create their own decorations using materials provided the free by the PNP. They were also free to bring home their creations, so they could teach the craft to other members of the family.

A key part of the seminar dealt with the craft's lucrative business opportunities. Trainers provided tips on where to buy the cheapest but most attractive materials, say for a cross-stitch, how to choose the shortest framework for a banner, or how to select a perfect kind of wax for a pyramid candle would melt evenly as he melts.

All this, Rafanan said, was aimed at encouraging participants to realize that, more than a seasonal fad, Christmas decor can be as profitable as the old "Christmas rounds" scam or the notorious parlor business had. And who knows? Cops may soon down the entertainment business.

For a start, Rafanan says officers may display their creations right in Camp Crame and decorate their respective offices. Soon they may sell the stuff to police stations all over the country. If that happens, not only would the PNP have a semblance of honest income but also an easy out for cops.

"These things are all possibilities," he says. "We simply want our men to realize that there are a myriad of opportunities in the unknown."

Considering the relative success of the pilot project, Rafanan is confident that no more policemen would go through the humiliating "ambush" of going from one house to another, politicking cash and other forms of gifts on the pretext of a coming PNP Christmas party.

For a change, they might even start playing Santa—stopping by your neighborhood and leaving a personal present, a minor-can lantern, right on your doorstep.

BSP chief blamed for peso fall

Previous A1

go steers hard on speculators, Ortiz says.

After Poe announced on Wednesday that he was running in the presidential elections next May the peso plunged to an intraday record low of 53.85 to the dollar the following day. The peso, however, ended that day at 53.69 to the dollar—still a record closing low. On Friday it slid further to 53.72.

Some traders and analysts said they expected the peso to breach the 56 level in the coming weeks.

Businessmen, however, said the peso would likely stabilize at 53 to the dollar this month because of expected huge inflow of dollar remittances from overseas Filipino workers. (See story in Business, page B6).

Ortiz's allegations increased Buencamino's. "We have presidential aspirations, but I don't have to tell him who and how much we levied against them in penalties," the BSP governor said.

Buencamino also questioned the competence of Ortiz in evaluating BSP policies, describing as "unresolved" his detractor's three-year stint at mismatch government.

Buencamino, who assumed the top BSP post during the Estrada administration, said Ortiz "should not stick to selling insurance or wait for me to step down so he could campaign to take over my seat."

Ortiz chairs Philtrabille, the country's biggest insurance firm and local subsidiary of the American insurance giant AIG.

Sergio Ortiz-Luis Jr., president of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said it was very easy to manipulate the currency market because of the small volume involved each day at the Philippine Dealing System.

"A deal involving $5 or $10 million between two companies is enough to dictate the level of the peso," Luis said.

He noted that the impact of political events and issues on the currency and stock markets had been "exaggerated," considering that only people from the A and B classes participate in these markets. With a report from AFP

By Maricel R. Cruz

ACTOR and television host Dingdong Dantes dreams of being a super hero while he was growing up. He used to pretend children's panties wearing the boxer Superman, Batman, Spiderman or Captain America costumes.

As he grew older, Dingdong's fascination with super heroes continued turned into a passion for collecting action figures, not only of his favorite comic book characters but also of heroes movie personalities like Freddie Krueger of "Nightmare on Elm Street" and Jason of "Friday the 13th."

"I buy every action figure I could get my hands on," says Dingdong, who joined Regine Entertainment into his bedroom as the showbiz Diaries home in Quezon City. "I used to have a lot of G. I. Joe and Superman stuff, but I gave most of them to my little brother."

But Dingdong still keeps a large collection in his room, most prominent of which is the life-sized Batman clad he swaps his head to movie heroes and outfit to get.

"I was able to have a shipped here from the States. This is quite new. I just had this last year," he says of his Batman toy. "It is by far the most expensive toy I've ever bought."

His new good is to keep a low-mid Pandora, a character from the movie of the same title that featured newly elected Californian governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. "It's made of metal," he explains. "Buying one won't be too much because I'm already now a couple in hundreds more."

Dingdong studied doing television commercials when he was three. He joined the Aliwan dancers at 13. Three years later, Dingdong became part of Gimik TV's youth-oriented show "TGIS," with Angelu de Leon and Bobby Andrews.

On weeknights, Dingdong is now opposite Tanya Garcia in the soap series "Twin Hearts" on GMA 7. He also hosts the network's newest reality-based talent search "Star Struck" with Nancy Castiglione.

This December, Dingdong will be seen in the big screen in "Mallbusters," Eanary Films' entry to the Metro Manila Film Festival this year. He plays a murder suspect in this caucuses thriller directed by Joel Javier Reyes. Even if he was not the original choice to play the role, Dingdong says he couldn't care less. "At least I get to work again with director Reyes," who had directed the actor before in two movies.

"There's a shocking twist to the story," said Dingdong of "Mallbusters," which also stars Rita Avila and Shaina Aguirre.

Dingdong, who's trying to flesh his degree at the moment, recently has also braved time to shoot the weekly fantasy-adventure series "Kahalukilo Adventures" on GMA 7. Directing the show is like making his favorite comic book characters come alive, according to Dingdong.

"I really enjoy my work in 'Kahalukilo.' Actually, it's the closest thing I could get to my dream of directing a sequel to 'Enteng ng Ina Mo,'" he said.

Lee Wilkinson's "Underworld," the vampire-and-werewolves adventure flick that features British actress Kate Beckinsale, was shown in local theaters last October.

Dingdong will have to live closer, the "Wolverine" outfit made for him by designer Rein Pineda several years ago for a pictorial for the cover of a notebook, also hanging in cubicle closet to the "Matrix" and he wears during the last SOF Halloween special.

Dingdong, who says he has over 30 suits, dressed his sister Kristine's sense of his favorites, like the pinstriped suit he got from Paul Cabral, "because I love swapping myself at a media."

"I also have my regular tux, which people would wear on my wedding to my movie with Albert Martinez—the one that produced," I first wore that to a Beach Fashion show. This is memorable to me because I made do fashion shows. I think this was part of Oprah's wedding line."

Formal suits. "I wear all my suits in black. I go for the classic look. I don't feel comfortable wearing something too outrageous."

Neckties. "My favorite tie is from Hugo Boss. It's memorable because I bought it with my own money. I was only 17 then. I bought it because I had to attend a debut party."

"Ties have to match the color and style of your suits. You must not wear a striped neck tie with a striped suit. The neckline has to be of the same length. Or Fold must touch your belt's buckle."

Belt. "In black, it's thick and it has a black buckle. It can be worn on any occasion. I've had it for two years now."

Accessories gone. "I wear jet when I first got into contracting racing. I used accessories during layout, specifics, a number of (actor) Bobby Andrews. I got all the tips from him. Bang aaaa-aaaa Aaaa! interesting. I never joined any competition but I used to participate in races within my group. We called our group Gundam.

"A good racer is someone who doesn't hurt pain. It's to diagnose sport. You must have a reliable helmet and a strong pair of boots. Be sure to wear your elbows, knee and chest protectors."

Nightwear. "I only wear simple pambahay clothes to bed. I sleep with an shirt on sometimes, but I like wearing boxer shorts. It's comfortable."

Jacket. "My dad gave me one of his canvas flight jackets, which I used playing war games with my friends. This is an authentic U.S army jacket. It even has a tag with a serial number. Pang pa-college 'to. My dad must have had this since the early '80s."

Jeans. "I like my jeans old, faded and torn. This is from Armani. I'm very particular with the fit. My jeans have to be straight cut. I don't want them too baggy."

Shoes. "I prefer my shoes in beige, tan and brown because these colors go well with both casual and formal clothes.

"I wear loafers with my suits only when the occasion is really formal. Most of the time, I wear my black boots.

"I use my Asahi rubber shoes when I go to the gym. This gym was given to me by a good friend, Vicky Davis of Senco. I love going to the gym. But sadly, my busy schedule now keeps me from working out regularly."

Eyeglasses. "All my shades are for reasons both casual and formal events. My favorite pair of eyeglasses has a metal frame. Feels the sporty in."

Watches. "Tim black Diesel sports watches are favorite. I like the design. It's not too flashy. I also like Diesel because it was given to me by a special someone during my birthday."

Perfumes. "I like Bvlgari and Hugo Boss Dark Blue. Perfumes with very strong scents must not be used during casual occasions, long-term-term staging (LA lyrics acting)."

TOYS of his past like this Superman doll and costumes are part of Dantes' superhero collection.

FOR footwear, Dantes prefers adidas tennis shoes and his beige workboots.

Photos by Jon Cañas Pascual

DAPPER says he owned Batman and wants to aspire to be Batman costume, a treasured piece, alongside a Wolverine costume (left) by Eric Pineda.

Dingdong and his super friends

OUT OF THE CLOSET

BOXER shorts are cheap wear for the actor who wore about 60 suits.

MORE boyhood memorabilia in Dantes' domain

METROBRIEFS

Brawl in San Andres

[illegible] was who only wanted to stop a fight were killed during a brawl in San Andres Hotel, Manila Bonnie Serrano, 18, of Tacuba corner Dagohoy streets, San Andres, and an unidentified passenger were yesterday woke up to the sound of gunfire the street, said SPO4 Bonifo Caballero. The two were trying to apply the fighting men, when an armed [illegible] man opened fire on the group of around 5 a.m., killing both victims.

Sara Soliman

Killing in Happy Land

[illegible] Ernesto M. Ordoñez Jr., a security was shot and killed after he allegedly arrested Pablo Otero Jr. at Barangay Poblacion Norte, a resident of Happy Land, Tondo, got upset when Ordoñez [illegible] over the alleged thefts [illegible] neighborhood at around 1 a.m. yesterday. Otero and two other men cornered Ordoñez at the neighborhood basketball court and shot the victim in the chest.

Sara Soliman

ADM leadership talk

[illegible] M. Medalla Jr., dean of the Asian Institute of Management's Center for Development Management is scheduled to deliver the topic "Exploring the Heart of Servant Leadership" during the three-day ninth anniversary conference which begins today at the ADM Conference Center in Makati City. The conference will run until Dec. 3. For details, please contact the ADM secretariat at 113-2000.

Booklair in Magsaysay

"[illegible] Mini Bookstore Booklair 2000" will be held Dec. 1 to 31 at the Activity Area, on the 2nd Level of Building A, SBMagsaysay, Edsa, Mandaluyong City. The exhibit-day event is organized by Powerbooks Inc. For inquiries, call Erma Ferrer at 896-0661 and 896-3967.

HOUSES FOR THE HOMELESS Social Welfare Secretary Dinky Soliman, Rep. Jack Duavit and Rector James of the McDonald's Earthwatch challenge donors to the fundraiser of building 20 houses for the homeless in Tarlac, Wed.

Rudy Caballero

Poor pay drives out best and brightest, say gov't scientists

By Margaux Ordo

THE LACK of benefits and incentives for engineers and scientists working for the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) may cause the government's best and brightest to look for greener pastures abroad or in private companies, according to a science research specialist.

Lei Jesse Miranda, concerned scientist and president of the Association of Employees in Scientific Endeavors, said that DOST employees, most of whom are very talented scientists and experts, are already tired of waiting for the full implementation of Republic Act 8439, or the Magna Carta for scientists, engineers, researchers and science and technology personnel.

Miranda said the Magna Carta, which was enacted in 1997 and implemented in 1998, promised to provide incentives and benefits that would "attract and keep the best and the brightest among the country's science and technology practitioners."

"But until now, the Magna Carta is still unfunded," Miranda said. "The executive is running from allowances and basic issues among the research and development institute employees."

Miranda explained that the DOST needs P521 million a year to fund the Magna Carta.

RA 8439 lists the subsistence allowances and other benefits the Magna Carta would also provide for the hazard pay of researchers exposed to dangerous elements like chemicals, radioactive and radiation. They share in the longevity pay which, Miranda said, would encourage scientists to stay and work in the government.

But Miranda said that because there is presently no budget appropriation for the Magna Carta, the 11 DOST agencies are compelled to use their own savings to fund its law.

"With the scheme, the department's smaller agencies are harmed because they have fewer employees, while the bigger agencies which generate most of the accomplishments suffer adversely," Miranda lamented.

Miranda, who works at the Industrial Technology Development Institute (ITDI) in Taguig, said depending subsidy on the agency's own savings also has other effects to them.

"At the ITDI for example, we are forced to postpone projects and forge important trainings so we could cut down on our expenses," Miranda said. "Ultimately we won't be allowed."

His concerns also stemmed that 10 well-trained experts have already left ITDI since 2000 because of lack of proper remuneration.

"Most of the people who left really excelled in their respective fields and were even visited abroad," she said. "They did not want to leave the government, but they were left with no choice."

She said that the DOST employees have held silent mass[illegible] rallies at the main office in Bicutan to show their resignation of the "complacency and indifference of the DOST management."

LLDA workers slam agency honcho for hitting campaign trail too soon

THE HEAD of the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) is under the allegation for failing to do his job because he is busy campaigning for President Macapagal-Arroyo.

LLDA employees on Wednesday stormed out of their offices and demanded the resignation of LLDA General Manager Celso Canapin.

The employees said Canapin has been acting as the Macapagal-Arroyo campaign manager in Laguna, Quezon, Rizal and parts of Metro Manila.

But during an interview, Canapin denied the charges, saying that he is "not openly" campaigning for the President.

He explained that when he visits towns and municipalities around the lake in the course of his job, "the employees get rather nervous campaigning."

Ed Concepcion, spokesperson of the Concerned Employees of the Laguna Development Authority said that Canapin has also been using LLDA resources in the campaign.

Concepcion said the LLDA chief also proposed to print [illegible] calendars to be given out next year.

Canapin, former mayor of San Pedro, Laguna, explained that the calendar were nothing more than promotional materials for the agency.

"There is no malice here," he said. "We only wanted to broadcast what the agency has been doing." Jaime del Prado

NCMH property sale leaves doctors worrying about patients

By Leigh del Prado

THE PROPERTY where the National Center for Mental Health sits is up for sale, and nurses and NCMH doctors and personnel are worried about their patients.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development and the Department of Health have decided to utilize property in Mandaluyong which is to build low-cost housing and support other DSWD programs.

But NCMH doctors and personnel are strongly opposing the sale, saying that the patients will greatly suffer when they are transferred to other regional centers still to be put up.

Accordingly, Dr. Anthony Dumale, president of NCMH Physician Association, Inc., the proposed regional mental health centers may not have sufficient equipment or capable staff to treat patients.

Fr. Robert Reyes on Thursday held a mass in support of the mental center's staff, and called on Mandaluyong Mayor Mayor Abalos and DSWD Secretary Dinky Soliman to keep NCMH's property.

"We are urging Mr. Soliman to stop the sale," Reyes said. "There are things more important than money."

Reyes said the mental center is a "national and cultural heritage" that should be saved, not shelved.

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METRO

E-mail: pi_metro@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Abelardo S. Utandig

Unit to cater to Chinoys' woes sought

Manila traders speak up

By Terry Quimpando and Luige del Puerto

IMPROVING the security of Chinese Filipinos could start with breaking through the language barrier.

This was pointed out in a recent command conference of Western Police District (WPD) officials, who invited Filipino-Chinese businessmen to share their views and concerns.

For one, Chinese Filipino business Club member Wilfe Tong asked the WPD to set up a Filipino-Chinese affairs office to take care of their concerns.

Manned by Chinese-speaking investors, the special unit could lead the investigation of crimes involving Chinese Filipinos.

"Because some Filipino-Chinese are not fluent in Tagalog, it's hard for them to express themselves when reporting to the police," Tong said.

He added it could be patterned after the NPD Muslim Affairs Office which attends to concerns of the Islamic community in Manila.

WPD director Police Sr. Supt. Rodolfo Magsaysay welcomed the idea. He said such a unit could function as a liaison desk, noting that there are Chinese-speaking policemen in the WPD.

At the Eastern Police District, officials have begun deploying two-man teams to boost security in enclosure areas in the cities of Pasig, Mandaluyong and Marikina as well as in San Juan.

At the same time, a circular letter to memorandum shifting members of the district special weapons and tactics (Dsat) team has been put on alert.

The strike force, which is under the direct command of EPD director Rolando Bacsasmenia, acts as a support team to the respective front units of each locality.

GIFT OF SMILE
Teresa Aldeguer uses her disc camera during the Christmas party organized by the Philippine Daily Inquirer at the Mt Sandy Plaza Remodelific (in green) at the PDI car park in Makati City. Inset shows the children dancing the "Otso-otso."

Fernando asserts MMDA rule

By Margaux Ortiz

THE MMA of words between the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) and the Pasakuan City government easy out again over the weekend with Chairman Bayani Fernando warning Mayor Jejoy Marquez that a Metro Manila Council resolution had more weight than a city ordinance.

Fernando was referring to a Council resolution, which Marquez himself signed, that bans illegal vending on the streets and sidewalks.

It was directed against a Pasakuan City ordinance allowing "reinstatement" to sell their wares in the streets around the Redemptorist Church through a month-long trade fair.

The MMDA chair pointed out that the council resolution was a "collective decision" of the Metro mayors.

The trade fair was scheduled to begin in the last week of November, but

Public warned vs cheap fireworks

THE PHILIPPINE Pyrotechnic Manufacturers and Dealers Association Inc. (PPMDAI), is warning the public on the proliferation of cheap yet illegally produced pyrotechnic materials which could prove hazardous.

PPMDAI president Celso Cruz asked the public not to buy firecrackers made by unlicensed manufacturers to avoid accidental explosions and injuries during the Christmas and New Year revelries.

He pointed out that illegal manufacturers, who operate without licenses and sell cheaper products, lack the technical knowledge in production, storage, sales and distribution.

Thousands of people are injured annually due to poorly crafted firecrackers made in makeshift workplaces. This has prompted the government to undertake the "Swak Paputok" campaign.

Again: Fun endangering the life and limbs of unsuspecting nonpyromaniacs. Do purchase and use of illegal fireworks affect the lives of legal makers of pyrotechnic materials, Cruz said. Carmelle Reyes, PDI Central/Laiton Bisk

Canon

Now you can print direct from Canon's new CP-200 & CP-300 PictBridge compatible photo printers.

PictBridge

Election talk marks Bonifacio Day rites

By Edson Tandoc Jr.

EAT ANDRES Bonifacio must have longed for his feds yesterday after the 139th commemorating his 140th birth anniversary boiled down to members talking of who is out for in next year's presidential election.

In a rally at the Mendiola in the afternoon, militant groups led by Bayan and Anakpawis wrapped up their program saying President Macapagal-Arroyo should not hope for their votes in 2004.

"We will not vote for her anymore," said Crispin Beltran, formerly Bayan Muna second representative, now Anakpawis' chair for political concerns.

Beltran said Mr. Macapagal was stirring up an administration which he described as corrupt and tyrannical.

Also, Sen. Panfilo Lacson has been "scratched out" of their list of presidential candidates, Beltran said.

Anakpawis and its 500,000 members nationwide are set to hold a convention in January to "analyze each presidential candidate," according to Beltran.

He said the group would be looking at the platform of former senator and education secretary Raul Roco and actress Ina Sotto Pan Jr.

Beltran said that Anakpawis campaign for whoever the political group ultimately deems worthy of its support for 2004.

For the Piers Quarters Bonifacio Day commemoration, Bonifacio would be the one who would fight for the public cause for truth.

President Ramon Mo. Domingo challenged the President to fulfill her promise to establish a truth commission "to review history and expose the wrongs of the past."

Domingo said the truth commission should look into the "crimes against humanity" during the Martial Law years.

Mr. Macapagal earlier promised the creation of the commission as part of her call for reconciliation, including with the Bisayans. But in a statement, the group said reconciliation would only be possible if truth is established and if the past is given proper closure.

PDP is one of the several organizations of Martial Law victims which comprise the umbrella group Alyansyon 21.

In celebration of the Bonifacio Day, the alliance held a fun run yesterday morning from the Bonifacio Monument in Caloocan City to the Sampaguita ng mga Bayani in Quezon City.

The fun run was dubbed Takbo ng Bayan Pangu na Pambansang and was led by Fr. Robert Reyes.

Forest development turning to charcoal

By Tina Santos

FOUR forest stewards are asking the Quezon City Regional Trial Court to order the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) officials to issue a cease and desist order against an alleged illegal logger who is reportedly cutting trees in their area in Antipolo City.

In a petition for mandamus with prayer for issuance of writs of preliminary mandatory injunction, petitioners Norman Garcia, Willie Garcia, Rachel Dascalcos and Jesus Garcia, all of Illinois Street, Cubao, Quezon City, said they were holders of Certificates of Stewardship over forest land in Sitio San Joseph, Barangay San Jose Antipolo City.

According to them, they had been developing their respective areas since 1993 by planting plants and trees.

In August 2000, however, a certain Elmo Inocencio allegedly began to encroach in their stewardship areas and began cutting down trees which he then made into charcoal.

The petitioners said they reported the activities of Inocencio to the Forest Management Service of the Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO) of DENR.

After the petitioners filed their complaint with the DENR, CENRO officer Reynaldo Rocky recommended the filing of charges against Inocencio.

No charges have been filed against Inocencio, however.

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A15

SPORTS

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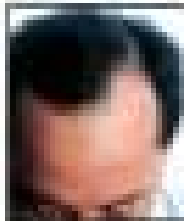

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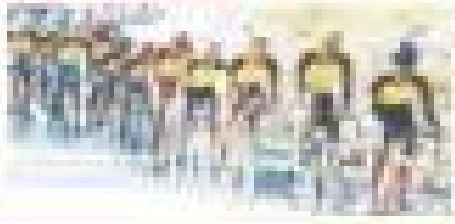


SMB draws first blood

HILARY tries to shake off Dorian Pena

By June Navarro

SAN Miguel Beer showed it can survive even without Kevin Johnson.

The Beermen backed the absence of Johnson and leaned on Danny Ildefonso down the stretch last night to escape with a thrilling 84-81 victory over the Coca-Cola Tigers in Game 1 of the PBA Reinforced Conference finals at the Araneta Coliseum.

Ildefonso scored all his four of the Beermen's last 13 points and stole the ball from Coca-Cola import Ter MacCloy with four seconds remaining to stifle the Tigers' last-ditch rally.

Johnson spent the entire fourth period on the bench after hurting his left groin late in the third quarter. Johnson went to get the ball loose from a driving Alex Mumford when he suddenly lost control, fell and writhed in pain on the floor.

The Beermen, who used only eight players, were enjoying a 65-57 margin when Johnson was pulled out of the game.

Ildefonso, a back-to-back MVP during the Beermen's glory years in 1999 and 2000, pulled his team together, sinking in 11 points to hold off the rallying Tigers at crunchtime.

Rudy Hatfield and MacCloy paired forces in a 3-0 blitz that gave the Beermen's 14-point lead to one at 80-79 with forty a minute remaining.

But Ildefonso broke the deadlock with a jumper from the baseline with 1:10 left to play, then stole the ball from MacCloy on the ensuing possession.

(more ...)

SEA GAMES

RP bets open up in archery, w'polo

HANOI—The Philippines officially opens its campaign in the 22nd Southeast Asian Games here today in archery and water polo.

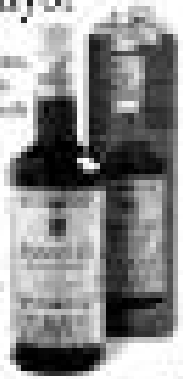
Archery team manager Ligaya Mendoza is confident as the archers, led by Sydney Olympian Jennifer Chan, begin their medal quest at the National Sports Training Center No.1 at 1 P.M. (11 A.M. in Manila).

"Medalo ang ang ano," said Ms Mendoza as the watched her charges go through the country's official practice yesterday. "Contrary to reports we received in Manila, the weather is just right—not too cold but not too hot. If we're lucky we can settle for golds."

It's very cold in the morning, according to Ms Mendoza. "But it becomes warmer at around 10 a.m. The wind blows slightly, so [the] archers should not experience problems."

(more ...)

Here's to healthy holidays!



RANCO VII

IRISH MOSSBACKLE

Who else but Primero

PLDT skipper rules Puerto Princesa cycling

PALMARES Elmer signs his autograph. BOY SIOSLAN

By Jose Navarro

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—Albert Primero finished first yesterday, turning back the challenge of bosom buddy Bernard Lanon in the criterium to rule the 1st Air21 Puerto Princesa Cycling Challenge.

Primero, skipper of PLDT-ESKO in the Tour Philippines, checked in with a big group of riders, along with Lanon to secure the overall lead after amassing an aggregate clocking of seven hours, three minutes and 10 seconds.

Lanon took home P50,000 after finishing second overall with identical time of 7:03:32.22, more than five minutes ahead of national team rider Nilo Espinosa who captured third overall after finishing the final leg in 7:08:47.70, who topped third and the P25,000 paycheck that went with it.

"Mind na ako umalis dahil Sabi nasa plan ko kasi si Bernard. Pero nung nasa pinakalayo ako nung nasa unahan sila, I played it safe to protect our lead," said the 25-year-old Primero, who hails from Buena Vista, Iloilo.

Asked what he would do with his winnings, Primero said he would purchase a high-end bike, similar to the one used by the national riders, and prepare for the national tryout next January.

Joining the national team has been a cherished dream according to Primero, who captured the final leg of the Tour de Cebuleon in 2002, a boon by one which ticked off the coast from during the summer.

Lanon, team captain of Barrel 117 said he would spend his winnings to prepare for the national team bound ride for Tour Filipinas 2003.

Bronze Lopez broke away from the pack on the 17th of the 20-lap criterium to edit the second and last stage of the meet chiefly sponsored by Air21 and the city of Puerto Princesa headed by Mayor Edward Hagedorn.

Lopez clocked two hours, 17 minutes and 10.61 seconds, almost three minutes ahead of Brides Noble (3:00:21.91), Virgilio Quibido Jr. (3:00:44.91), and Ronnel Hualda (3:00:35.91) rounded up third and fourth, respectively, in the race also backed by Pacific and Mail & More.

Loveless night for RP billiards

BARE EYE

Rocah Trinidad

SINGAPORE—Only cynics getting wasted on a three cheerless days.

Needless, it was no longer easy seeing rare sounds for Efren "Bata" Reyes.

On Saturday night, unless they re-opened the venue of his elevation to the Billiards Congress of America Hall of Fame. The Magician ran out of rabbits to pull off his hat.

His biggest night of the year became a vessel of agony.

Bata Reyes' championship battle against Mika Immonen in the Pool Philippines Open 9-Ball title moment into a monument of misrule for the lovable billiards legend.

Reyes lost it 12-11 and, unlike in the past, when he would pilfer a favorable string off defeat to just another bad night, Bata appeared ready and willing to call his shot.

The Asian and many fans that he had had his fun, as Anthony Hamlet aptly put it, on the injury.

After Reyes arose up, 6-4, and later, 10-8 in the race to 11 finals, his fans had expected a revival for the push for their idol.

Here and why Reyes failed to coach the Lillet show up his visibly discouraged for will to make a subject of debate.

Maybe his nerves and courage have finally taken their toll.

Maybe, as in boxing, it was a case of too many pavalion, he lost many nights, in his many trips.

It's not and easy to explain.

The painful truth is that, more than Reyes and his legion of devotees, the biggest losers were local sponsors and backers who had, twice in a row, spent a fortune in a bold bid to showcase Pinoy greatness through Asian-rigged billiards wizardry.

Before that Saturday night Rep by Bata, his fantastic things Immonen's last October lost a major championships runs a game against Johnny Archer in a curiously televised solid, calibre-seven.

That Bata could agree is forgivable.

Last Saturday night was, however, pure and simple a hoodoo night for Philippine billiards.

Bata's fall against Immonen, whom the local pool legend seemed to have had under his spell in the middle rounds, left and Ronnie Alcano's loss to Ralf Souquet in the quarterfinals of the clubs that the 8th spray to the finest cue artist in the world.

We, Reyes did not go down just like that.

He lead, in fact, appeared well-armed, saying and ready to climb from the glory cup.

But the second, Bata Reyes, rather than the home court edge, had enjoyed a whole-some break while wondering Immonen struggle every inch of the way to the world's No. 1 against Django Bachmeier.

The Django-Immonen semifinal match, played after Reyes had dispensed of tough cue-turner Ronnie Alcano, was nerve-wracking, to say the least.

Saturday night, as client, held the sweetest promise for Bata.

Why? Well, if it were in ballfighting, Django had perfectly played the old, tell-able picador by properly tiring down and wearing up Immonen for the kill.

Django had outmaneuvered and bloodied Immonen before pressing his foe to his dangerously in the ground of the duel.

Maybe this ideal set-up had led Bata to recount the field of fame this, a perfect path for the championship party.

With Bata up 10 and 6 and needing only three more shots to complete his hoodoo night of the year, four in succession suddenly broke had to place advanced orders for drinks.

Immonen mounted a tough salvo on the 4-ball but Bata countered with a massive attack. Andy Anonuevo, should be preserved to be a library of the world's best pool shots.

Bata played great defense, but Immonen was there to the hole.

In fact, the Finnish wonder worker appeared to have stolen the magic from Reyes with a kick off nine on the 3-ball. Seldom was lodged deep against the left end rail.

Bata, after his challenging safety recovery, when he had had to practically chip and crawl back from an unforgiving cliff, his bosses should've been herded the Steel Reeve trophy together with the $150,000 top money.

Bata arose straight with a current idea for the 8-ball and paid dearly with a foul after the cue ball also fell into the left corner pocket.

There was also a shallow score when he faced an impossible combination on the 2-ball which was lodged against the 6-ball on the right rail. He could have played it safe.

On a most promising night when he could've handily won the cue-ball and added endless adulation, Bata Reyes was nowhere, by a mile, near The Democrat Immonen.

Welcoat whips ICTSI-La Salle

GAMES THURSDAY

7:00 p.m.—Ateneo vs UST (Women)
8:30 p.m.—Ateneo vs La Salle (M)

WELCOAT Paints proved too classy for ICTSI-La Salle yesterday, scoring a 75-51 victory in the Philippine Basketball Association (PBA) Philippine Cup at the San Juan Gym.

Getting another splendid performance from Rabinet team mainstay Ervin Sotto, the Paint Painters broke the game wide open in the second quarter en route to their ninth win in seven outings.

Sotto and PBA teammates James Yap and Mars Pingris are leaving tomorrow for the Vietnam SEA Games basketball tournament starting Saturday.

Sotto, who had 19 points, 11 rebounds and three assists, was ably supported by Rabinet Jose, who added 14 markers, and Welcoat import Ronnie Magsanoc, who had 13 points, 10 rebounds and four assists.

The Welcoat-Ateneo combination was the only team to beat the Lady Spikers in the Philippine Collegiate Championship.

The Lady Spikers, who are bidding for a fifth straight title, will play the Lady Eagles at 7 p.m. today.

Ateneo coach Tai Bundit said he was pleased with the performance of his wards.

"We played well. We executed well," said Bundit.

Ateneo will play La Salle at 8:30 p.m. today.

Welcoat (75)—Sotto 19, Pingris 13, Yap 14, Magsanoc 13, Jose 14, Cruz 2, Cortez 0, Ramos 0, Cabahug 0, Ilustre 0, Ramirez 0, Ong 0.

ICTSI (51)—Alfaro 10, Ramos 0, Lim 0, Tang 0, Tan 0, Nunez 4, Cabalo 4, Tiston 2, Magnaye 12, Aquino 2, Lozano 0, Cardenal 0.

Quarters: 20-14, 40-30, 62-42, 75-51

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Blue tops Caruncho b'minton

TEAM Mr. Quickie-Blue Team won the New Mayor Emiliano Caruncho Jr. Memorial Badminton Cup held last May 20-25 at the Badminton Gym courts in Pasig City.

Pasig Vice Mayor Lorna Bernardo joined members of the Caruncho family in awarding the champion's cup and P60,000 worth of prizes to the winners.

Some 200 players from Pasig and nearby cities and towns vied for honors in the tournament held in honor of the late mayor to commemorate his contributions to the people of Pasig City.

Among the winners (Mixed)—Ashley Garcia and Lee Al Baron (Boys)—Mark Ashley Valerio, Raul Dizon (Girls)—Jessa Sampan, Michelle Cruz (Men's)—Aaron Patrick Ale Reyes (Men's 35)—Glen Santos, Ian Mendez (Men's 40)—Jose Cris Abad (Men's 45)—Jaime Mike Ermac (Men's 50)—Dan Lubio (Women)—Dinah Alcaraz (Men's Doubles)—Ashley Garcia and Mark Ashley Valerio (Mixed Doubles)—Jaime Mike Ermac and Dinah Alcaraz.

54th Fil-Am golf under way today

All the stars of the show take a two-day rest, the duffers in the lower brackets get the ball rolling starting today in the 54th Fil-Am Invitational tournament at the Baguio Country Club and Camp John Hay courses in Baguio.

Teams in flights C, D, E and F in both the Fil and Am divisions striking up-hill coffee kicked off 7:00 a.m. Sunday, the two-day event was set off hostilities in the six-day meet now recognized in the world's biggest tournament by the Guinness Book of Records.

Each squad is allowed to field five players with the best four under the Stableford system of scoring counting for the round.

The big dompoeding duo battle in the FI and Am divisions roll out next until Wednesday. Off-Southwood is seeking a fifth straight NI division title while Marana IHK is gunning for a third straight Am division trophy.

Charly Bisetto, captain of the South woods team, said that with 30 other teams available for practice, they will be spending the next two days fine tuning their swing at the range as well as his putting and chipping game.

"We'll just relax, probably hit balls at the range and prepare for Wednesday," said Bisetto.

Golf to serve for Southwood's Antonio Haraldezi, one of Davao's H players, who caddied for Frankie Minoza in last week's Cash World Open in Japan.

Mariano IHK, team captain Lovell Espino said both teams are gunning for no less than a sweep of both divisions of the tourney. —Jong Aviano

San Miguel Beer draws first blood

[illegible] long dry spell with a jumper in the last 22 seconds, 82-79. Jeffrey Cariaso struck on the next play, but Olsen Racela split his three-stir off a foul from Red Bowie for 83-81.

Robinson added another free throw to set the final score after earlier knocking the ball off McClure's possession.

TAY 'N Text pummeled Sta. Lucia Realty, 123-100, earlier to place third and end its own on a respectable note.

Import Dondon Gamboa, Art Tauhiwa and Jimmy Alapag set aside their home-import jaws in the semifinals against Coca-Cola and focused on outshooting the Redhorse to secure their first win, 3 finish.

Inside to their respective semifinal series against the Tigers, Gamboa and Tauhiwa displayed their old offensive flair while Alapag, Rio-ray Garvo and Mark Telan played their supporting roles to the hilt.

Scores:

Red Lions

TAY 'N TEXT (82)—Gamboa 30, Tauhiwa 22, Alapag 14, Cuiay 12, Bello 12, Pollo 8, Lozada, Mendoza 0, Belmonte 0, Ramil (dnp). Abunda.

STA. LUCIA (79)—Castro 30, Jimenez 19, Castro 11, Medina 10, Adams 7, Tan 2, Nobleza, Arante 0, Edaño 0, Soriano.

Quarters: 17-23, 42-43, 59-57, 123-100.

Second Game

SAN MIGUEL (84)—Arnaiz 17, Dalupan 17, Ong 15, Bolick 12, Reyes 10, Mallillin 5, Villegas 3, Mallari 3.

COCA-COLA (8—Reyes 22, Hamonte 15, Castro 11, Mallillin, Arnaiz 5, Nocum 4, Bruno 2, Ramir 1, Arnaiz 0, Ang Soldo 0, Ordoñez 0.

Quarters: 23-20, 41-38, 59-56, 84-84.

Barcelona wins vacant superfly title

By Solven L. Legumbay

EBC Barcelona knocked out Cebu's Ilonsua Bay in the fifth round of their 12-round bout Saturday night to win the vacant Philippine super flyweight crown.

Barcelona, who only had a two-week notice for the fight, was leading on points entering the fifth round, four rounds shutting Ilonsua Eight Girl was subjected to a clinch-free standing for the third.

Midway through the fifth round, the Bohol-non thugger unleashed a left to right that sent Bay to the canvas.

Bay's fighting spirit, got up then courageously fell to the canvas again and failed to beat referee Virgilio Garcia's count.

Air Force XI stamps class

TRIUMPHANT champion Philippine Air Force stamped their fame anew, hitting Army 2-1, yesterday in the Globe Super Cup.

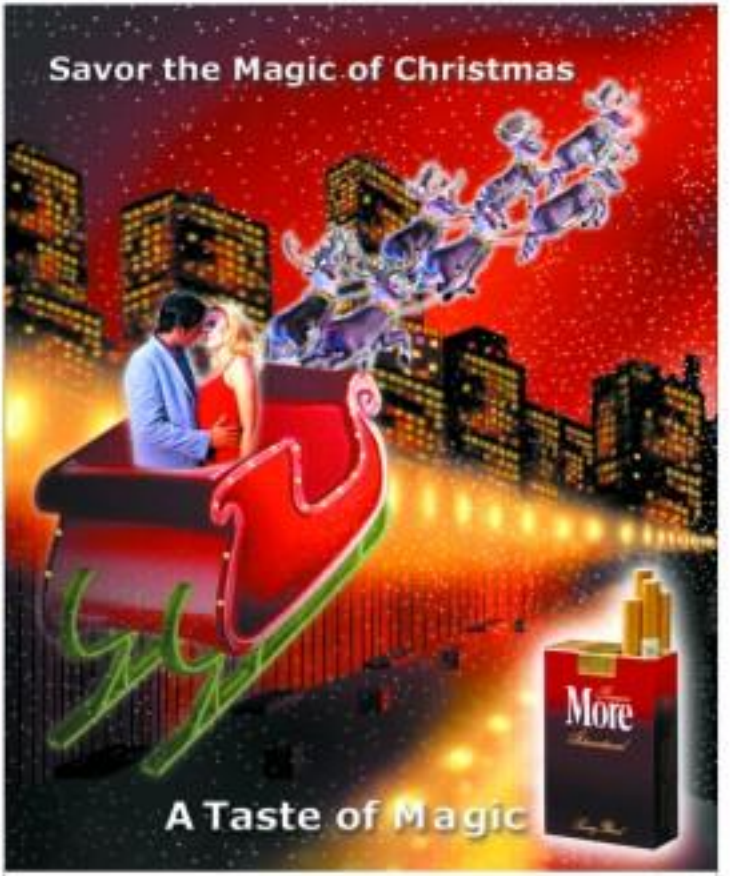
In other matches, Navy eliminated Ang Lipa champion Don Bosco College, 1-0, while Sampaguna UFL champions Kaya FC downed College of St. Benilde, 2-0. University of Santo Tomas scored a 3-0 victory over Philippine Navy, Ateneo beat Nomads A, 2-1, and Magna Green blanked Manila All Japan, 3-0.

Romualdez is new football supremo

ROBERTO ROMUALDEZ was a four-star candidate as the new president of the Philippine Football Federation (PFF) in elections held Saturday at the Dusit Hotel in Makati City.

Romualdez, a left-handed star midfielder of several PFF squads in the 1950s and currently the executive vice president of the PFF, will take over the reigns from Rene Aduol, who chose not to run for re-election.

Romualdez received a unanimous 11 of 17 votes against his only rival, Rep. Manny Piamonte.



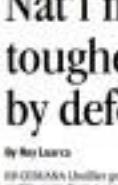
Government Warning:
Cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health.

Fearless forecast: 10-12 wins this

SUBMERGETTA. Going for long-distance hat-trick

Nat'l five toughened by defeat

By Ray Lauro



DEL ROSARIO

SEA GAMES

More golds but no big RP finish seen

By Ernesto Gonzales

Everything's fine with Torre

TORRE

PSC: We are confident the President is awa

time from athletics

Woe to the Magician's pool rivals in Vietnam

PITY his opponents in the coming Southeast Asian Games—they're going to bear the brunt of Efren "Bata" Reyes' wrath.

Reyes suffered a frustrating 11-12 defeat to fellow former world champion Nilka Encinares in Cash Cole Pizza 9-ball Philippine Open title duel Saturday night, leaving the Filipino idol burning inside and aching for vengeance.

It was rare for the 40-year-old Reyes to be beaten when he was ahead (10-8) and even rarer when he's playing in front of his countrymen.

Fact is, Bata's son, 20-year-old Francisco (Django) Reyes, was a witness to his father's recall as incident when his father led only 9-nine in 9-ball.

"He dribbled after rack some glitter on the Hall of Fame award received on him by the Billiards Congress of America before the finals of the $64,000 event.

That hyper, the 1999 World Open champion, came home $10,000 richer for his runner-up effort was hardly any consolation.

Fireside knows that his father wouldn't exchange the money for the joy he would have brought on his usual 10-mile of fans.

"I hope my father can fight back in the BSA Games and bring the gold medal for the country," said Fireside, a third year Computer Science student of Holy Angel University in Angeles City.

Fireside, who learned not in the elimination round of the 8P Open, said his father is optimistic that they (Billiards and snooker players) would be able to contribute substantially to the Philippine medal rollers in Vietnam.

The Nationals will be flying to Ho Chi Minh City tonight for the pool competition slated Dec. 5-11.

REYES: Due to redeem himself

Completing the team choices by the Billiards and Snooker Congress of the Philippines are world-renowned Francisco "Django" Bustamante, two-time SEAG Bronze and Nada Lanopaz gold medalist Lee Tuan Cortina, Reynaldo Grandea, SL 13-ball gold medalist Warren Kiamco, SL 9-ball gold medalist Antonio Lining, Asian snooker champion Marlon Manalo, SL snooker gold medalist Jeanne Ortega, Felipe Tuan Jr. and Emilio Hilario.

Bustamante and Lining also accounted for the 9-ball doubles gold in the Busan Asian Games.

They will be accompanied by Bcards Incular and Alexander Trinidad.

Patch Puyat, president of Puyat Sports and acknowledged as billiards godfather, will also be planning in later to join the team.

Puyat wants to see how Bata and Django would reborn themselves and again bring glory to the country. Boy Luerva

Jins worry only about fair scoring

Taekwondo star Geisler, 3 others gold potentials

GEISLER: Taekwondo spearhead

GREEN fever seeking, the country's taekwondo jins will be bidding the opposition around in Vietnam.

"Our aim is to capture five plate overall and we have what it takes to deliver," said team manager Lt. Noli Gabriel.

"We're well prepared," Gabriel added of the 15-man taekwondo squad bidding to get back at host Vietnam, which dethroned the Filipinos as champions in Malaysia, 4 golds to 3.

Four aces

Spearheaded by four aces now seeking Olympic berths in a qualifying tournament in Paris, France, the taekwondo squad has undergone a long, hard buildup in anticipation of an all-out show by Vietnam in its own backyard.

"If the tournament has a good lineup of referees and the scoring is fair, I'm sure we're going to get first place again," Gabriel emphasized.

Barring an unfortunate injury in the Olympic qualifying, veterans Donald David Geisler II (lightweight), Teksolabo Go (flyweight) and female jins Sally Sola (welterweight) and Rafaela Tenorio (heavyweight) will be prime gold prospects in Vietnam.

Gabriel said the fact that the four were given shots at berths in next year's Olympiad in Greece underscored their lofty credentials.

Another team line key for a gold is flyweight Roberto Cruz, who is going for a record seventh straight title in the SEAG. Now 20 and a father of 2, Cruz has been unbeatable in his three meet pacting his first win in 1991.

Promising teener

Veronica Domingo, winner in the women's lightweight in Malaysia, is back, but Gabriel said the team's surprise pack-age could very well be Mary Antoinette Rivera, a 15-year-old junior at St. Paul (Iloilo).

Gabriel said he has set seven the kind of pressure Rivera has shown for a girl her age. A gold medalist in the US Open in Las Vegas, Nevada, last year, Rivera took a silver in the Asian Open and Asian Junior championships this year.

Rounding out the team are Ferdie Sinigue, Alexander Briones, Manuel Rivero Jr., collectively Go, Dan Marfil, Eva Marie Dilan, Edwin Cardero, Margarita Bonifacio and Ann Margaret Reyes.

Another contender

Gabriel said Thailand will also be a contender for overall honors but it won't be as tough as Vietnam, which built the country's most and biggest multi-sports gym in the SEAG precisely to host the taekwondo competition.

"Vietnam won its first Olympic medal through taekwondo so it is expected that the host will do everything to dominate the sport at home," said Gabriel.

But the Filipinos are undaunted, Gabriel said, because they know the odds and they're ready to buck them. Ernesto Gonzales

TAEKWON-DO: Rivero's best bet

GOOD FOR 3 VICTORIES

Boxers out to reclaim lost glory

MANNY Lopez watched intently as the 8P Reviews boxers did their final sparring on Wednesday. He liked what he saw.

The boxers, out to reclaim Southeast Asian Games supremacy, appeared to be in sharp form. Their punches were crisp, strong. Their footwork fast and balanced. Their defense tight and solid.

They should be good for 3-4 golds in Vietnam, Lopez, the local boxing chief, and the punching staff headed by Gregorio Colleen overseer.

They're gunning their hopes on veterans Harry Tavarres, gold medalist in the 1st SEA-Asian Games held last month, and Violeta Dayta, gold medalist in the Acropolis Cup, Gen Rex Tournament and the Chumley Cup.

Tavarres will go in bantamweight (lightest) while Dayta will campaign in the Thailand bronze medalist, is the favorite in the light fly category and so is Dayta, who is out to better his bronze output in the 2001 Kuala Lumpur.

Among the newcomers, Jean Tipon holds the brightest promise having topped the batt-am division of the pre-SEAG tournament in Vietnam. The 21-year-old Tipon, champion of the Ilaya National Open in Pinkaset, turned out many time interchanges when he lure-lure between the featured Thais and Vanilla with his style yet.

Juanito Magbanua also took the gold in the pre-SEAG, ballooning his excellence to duplicate his gold medal in the 1999 Bronze edition of the biennial meet.

Colleen and his deputies, Rolito Velasco and Pat Gaspi, believe everyone in the nine-man team is capable of reaching the medal round in the Ho Minh City, where the boxing competitions will be held from Dec. 5-10.

They are Francis Jones, Hermanito Reyes, Pil-Am Christopher Cantal, Rhah James Phillipes and Ruel Lagutao.

After all, almost all of them were able to compete in at least one of the eight international tournaments lined up for them by the Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines in preparation for the SEAG.

Team 8P Reviews, including team manager Ruben Dingle, left Saturday.

Their mission: Improve on their two-silver, 3-bronze output in the 2001 KL edition.

Their chances: Bright if not very good. Boy Luerva

, pals; Caoili missing

re of the athletes' needs

Pinoy bets open up in archery, water polo

PHILIPPOUSSIS made Aussies sing, but Ts & Cs, 7-6, 6-2, 7-6, 2-6, 6-3 win over Ferrero. AFP

28TH DAVIS CUP TITLE

Philippoussis lifts Aussies to victory

MELBOURNE, Australia—Mark Philippoussis threw his racket, then dropped to the ground, as much from pain and exhaustion as from exhilaration.

Fighting off an injury to his right shoulder, Philippoussis gave them title in 2003 Davis Cup on Sunday with a strong 7-5, 6-3, 3-6, 2-6, 6-3 win over Spain's Juan Carlos Ferrero, clinching the best-of-five 2003 World Group final, 3-1.

"At the end I was just consistently numb," said Philippoussis. "It felt like I wasn't playing—I was out of reality, living from one ralle. I didn't know what was going on. Thank God Chris' chair were going in."

A scheduled second reverse singles match Sunday between Lleyton Hewitt and Carlos Moya was not played.

Philippoussis, known as "The Beast," played strongly at first but then suffered extreme back pain after his match as the Australian ignored pain in his serving side right shoulder. After the fourth set, when he received prolonged treatment, Philippoussis appeared to decide to hold serve and force broke Ferrero's opening 2-0.

Holding on to the racket and refusing to be moved, Philippoussis went up 3-0 in the next game and when broke Ferrero again in the fourth when the Spaniard's fleeting backhand went long.

In the fifth set, when Philippoussis broke in the fourth, then dropped to the floor while his teammates mobbed him to congratulate him.

AUSTRALIA'S victorious Davis Cup team celebrate after defeating Spain, 3-1. Shown are (from left): Todd Woodbridge, Mark Philippoussis, captain John Fitzgerald, Lleyton Hewitt and Wayne Arthurs. AP PHOTO

Philippoussis told the shoulder ailment bothering him since days ago and that he'll undergo an MRI scan Monday to determine if there is a tear to the muscle.

"But there was no way I could quit, this is what Davis Cup is all about," he said. "You have to leave your heart out there."

Australian captain John Fitzgerald said: "I think we've got a guy today who just became a national hero."

It was Australia's first Davis Cup victory since Pat Cash led Australia over Sweden on the Centre Court at Kooyong in Melbourne.

It was also Australia's fourth Davis Cup win over Spain—all on grass. Spain's only Davis Cup title came over Australia on clay in Barcelona three years ago. AP

Bye for finalists proposed

MELBOURNE—The Davis Cup finalists should receive a bye from the following year's second round, Spanish captain Jordi Arrese said on Sunday.

Spain lost the Davis Cup final to Australia in Melbourne on Sunday when Mark Philippoussis beat Juan Carlos Ferrero, 7-5, 6-3, 3-6, 2-6, 6-3, to give the home team an unassailable 3-1 lead.

The second reverse singles match was called off after the win.

When Spain won the event in 2000 they lost in the first round in 2001 while Australia, who lost the final to 0 least on the same grass court in Eindhoven last June, was also knocked out in the first round in 2002. Reuters

Frankie caps stint with late blitz

FILIPINO ace Frankie Miñoza closed out his 2003 campaign with a double-eagle midday, posting a 2-under-par 70 yesterday to earn a share of 20th place in the $1.2-million Asian Crown World Open 2003 at the Kintetsu course of the Ibaraki Golf Club in Kitaibaraki Prefecture, Japan.

After being clouded by a triple-bogey disaster on the 10th, Miñoza needed that stalling finish to break par and avoid another disappointing showing in yet another struggling season.

Entrenched mid-completed a relatively-up with 69-71-70-70 for seven strokes over Brendan Jones (67) and new circuit leader Shingo Katayama (66) with a whopping 24-under-par 264 aggregate.

Miñoza earned 1,861,000 yen (about P748,000 at exchange) for 20th finish—a huge 17,000,077 yen (about P7 million) for 19th in the rankings.

Only Che-Chi Hsieh of Taiwan (T-Top-1) left in the Japanese Tour but Miñoza is not eligible to compete in the event since only the top-30 players of the money list make up the field.

He is expected to make a final appearance when the Philippine Open is staged in Manila in February.

Birdies on the seventh and eighth got Miñoza going only to falter with that triple-bogey blunder on the 10th. He made another birdie on the 12th but pushed another stroke on the next hole.

Miñoza's 18th hole eagle came after he finished it in the second and third rounds. Arnie Swann

MINIZA. Eagle birdie

STA. LUCIA TOUR

Alta Vista golfers gun for clincher

PEZAS from a tailing the opposition in the Alcantara Channel, Alta Vista gunned for the clincher in the final stop this week of the 2003 Sta. Lucia Golf Tour at the Eagle Ridge and Orchard courses.

The Cebuanos will try to cement a come-point lead over Filoil-Marian and Eagle Ridge in their place, just 11 point behind, as the course-hopping circuit comes to an exciting conclusion this Friday at the Montosa course of Eagle Ridge and on Saturday at the Palmer course of the Orchard.

After two legs, Alta Vista is on top with 60 points, barely due to its three-division victory at Canlubang, while Eagle Ridge (with Eagle Ridge A third with 57, Royale Tagaytay 56 and Orchard 54.

Unlike in the previous three stagings of the Sta. Lucia Tour, five rounds at the Orchard and Eagle will be treated in separate legs.

This will give the other teams a chance to close in on the pack in the first two legs. Sta. Lucia Cup, symbol of overall supremacy in the 10-round, five-course series featuring their operating under the banners of the real estate firm.

Alta Vista, the defending overall champion, will try to remember the leads it fished from pulled off by Eagle Ridge in the first two editions of the tournament. Alta Vista's Oabesh, Ramos, Sandoval, Gomez, Mendoreng, Salinas, Bolido, Bautista, Bonnet, Bonifacio, Bonnido, Ortega and Dagoro with Glenn Polo Bernard, Maestro Ecleo and Daniel Abriol Hilario Bibanbil as partner boards and Celso Pacella as the coach-in-charge.

Vicente Santos and caregiver Winifred Bello, co-chairs of the Sta. Lucia Tour Committee, said a eight of five rounds the 240 participants when the unending overtonnages of the event is held at the Bataan Peak of the Orchard.

Unique double tee range rising in Eagle Ridge

AMSTERDAM giant is rising at the Eagle Ridge Golf and Country Club. This time, it's located to be erratic.

Internationally-renowned golf complex ranks up of four championship courses as well as four sparkling new clubhouses, work has started on a unique driving range that will again distinguish Golf from the rest mainly because of its size and design.

The big club like Eagle Ridge's should be a big range," said engineer Winfred Goh, project engineer of Eagle Ridge which is undoubtedly one of Asia's toughest clubs.

Goh said that the range being constructed will have a minimum land area of 10 hectares and designed to cater all the facilities for complete game improvement with chipping, putting and following areas.

Players using off from one of the four course tees, 20s, Battle and Innovator) need not worry.

The range will have two hitting areas on opposite ends covering all courses, one close to the hotel clubhouse and the other close to the Main and Family clubhouses which is in proximity to the first and 10th tees of the Fields and Horizons.

Each hitting area is designed with 50 bays (hitting stalls) and a provision for a second level. When one end is another, the total distance will be less than 350 meters. Another feature is a three-level hitting area that will contain a well-manicured bunker at the second area.

"We hope to have the range operational in three months' time," said Goh.

In the future, Goh hopes to establish a golf academy that will help in the development of talents not just from the Eagle Ridge but for golfers around the world also become a source of major championships and the training ground of future national teams.

Eagle Ridge, a joint venture project of the Alsons Group and the Sta. Lucia Realty, is offering investment packages including membership at very affordable rates. For inquiries, call 946-41 92892.

A "Bata" among men

UNLIKELY!Elton "Bata" Reyes was a picture of a man stumbled and confessed following his entry loss to Mike "Bo Jackson" Swanson of Kirkland in last Saturday's finale of the well-attended Shoot-a-Par Golf Tournament at Eagle Ridge Golf and Country Club.

Many were expecting Reyes to steal the show on a bright note here by emerging the champion of this tournament, but their "Bata" lost to the novice from Portland, 13-12, in the nerve-wracking finish.

After completing the eighth 9-4 deadlock to-15 thereby-win, Bata found himself—in the words of renowned TV anchor Andy Jao—dominated by the "gods of billiards," enabling Jaoanson to score back strongly and, with the count at 10-10, pinned target for four strokes to a victory margin of 30-28.

"Everybody's sitting on pins and needles," Jao said of the action in each 25 minute the two pool counters figured in a real-living battle of wits and subtlety, with the score tied at 12-12. But in the end, youth prevailed experience as the 29-year-old Swanson, averaging only 9.4 deadlocked and fell of concentration, outlasted the 40-year-old Reyes. How's the world? Mr. 1 pool pro, Jaoanson, won $30,000 from the sponsors and the organizing Pagat Spirit, headed by renowned sports persons headed by Ferdinand Pajot and 4000-GM. Another two pros, Bonnington also won the inaugural. On Oct. 1 Philippine-versus-Indonesia tournament, hosting Ball Jacquet of Germany in an all-European finals.

The good-looking Jaoanson first made sports history in 2001 when he won the World Pool Championship in Cardiff, making sure that the world pool title stuck in Europe following the Steve Armstrong of the championship the past two years when Ang Pang-chao of Taiwan won in 2000 and Bustamante in 1999.

Speaking of Reyes, I say he is a "Bata" among men, no ears for all seasons. Reyes is dearly beloved by his fellows at Jaoanson for his humanity, for his selfless ments and for his fabulous. It's worth reflecting on how he grew billiards respect and recognition of how Bata Reyes, also called "The Magician," became one of a handful of billiards athletes who has been showered with international medals, including prizes for the prestigious Billiards Congress of America Hall of Fame Award. Reyes was first finisher in the world's major pool tournaments. Bata Reyes has earned nearly $300,000 that way.

Reyes is always a source of pride and fascination, simple and humble, he still be having a lasting impression not only of his court exploits but also in the way he accomplished them. He became a living legend in billiards because of his limitless patience, strong discipline and serious dedication to the sport, and even though he did not receive a single centavo from the government in his international campaigns, Bata Reyes has put the Philippines in the world map for the longest time by many major international tournaments, including the most recent, monte-rich Dubai and all Japan Open in Osaka.

Basketball since 1948 by the Reyes brothers, Bata Reyes and his Pajot brother, Efren "Bata" Reyes, who is known as "Efrenger" Bautista, and Canada-based Alex Pagulayan are role models to all Filipino athletes. When their competitive demand, they could do more than simply win matches. They could, at the same time, win friends and even appreciation for their talents and their sport.

JEET CERDEÑA: There's more than meets the eye in the "boon accounting" of Manny Pacquiao's expenses in preparation for his controversial fight against Mexican idol Marco Antonio Barrera, whose he stopped in the 11th round Sunday for the crown. Pacquiao's registered manager, Martin Lim Heredia, and Rodolfo Bacarro, the boxer's business manager, failed to give him the receipts for $350,000 allegedly spent for training in California and Texas. Heredia and Bacarro merely submitted the breakdown of the expenses. "Kanya-kanya lang ng tago-gastos." The cost of boxing great Flash Elorde, Manny Steward learned the accounting hazard in the original $500,000 purse and cut on the $250,000 which turned out to be the actual purse set aside by cable TV network HBO.

Because of this realization now many boxers, Pacquiao has reportedly hired an Australian accountant to supervise his deal with HBO, which is offering a more lucrative contract. The Filipino boxer is reported to be unhappy over the way his handlers have negotiated for his previous fights and now wants one with his present deal, including that with MAGIC promoter Gabriel Elorde-Penaso, Quiazon's former protégée.

Last year, Barrera inked for Pacquiao a 2 1/2 year promotional contract with Muhammad for fights in the United States worth $2.55 million. Before that, Barrera had dueled with Elorde, who was then negotiating a similar contract with HBO. But Elorde eventually allowed Barrera to take over all future negotiations for Pacquiao. Time since the 1981 revelation that the actual purse was $750,000 and not $500,000 as Pilotaris had openly announced, Elorde said they all learned before the fight that there was indeed $750,000. But it seems the purse is $700,000. Heredia said half of the purse, or $350,000, was spent for Pacquiao's promotion and training in the US, including car hire and hotel's and lodging for members of Team Pacquiao.

The Elorde subsidiary Penaso's coming expenses totalled $350,000," said Heredia.

Heredia said: "I think we've got a guy today who just became a national hero."

It was Australia's first Davis Cup victory since Pat Cash led Australia over Sweden on the Centre Court at Kooyong in Melbourne.

It was also Australia's fourth Davis Cup win over Spain—all on grass. Spain's only Davis Cup title came over Australia on clay in Barcelona three years ago. AP

Cash, Hopper, Sison set up Subic camp

SUBIC BAY: World tour champion Dot Cash will coach at a five-day Tennis Master Camp at the Subic Bay International Tennis Center in Subic Bay Freeport Zone on Dec. 17.

Together with Cash are Dennis Hopper of the Cash-Hopper Tennis academy and former Cagayan and ABP Tour player Benjamin Sison. Cash will lead a team of coaches that will perform a series of Master Camps throughout Asia to help develop players into world class tennists.

Hopper, the world's renowned "tennis guru" who is behind the success of Lleyton Hewitt, Mark Philippoussis, Marcelo Rios and Amanda Coetzer, recently established the Cash-Hopper International Tennis Academy headquarters in Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia.

The Subic Bay Camp offers training programs for all ages. For inquiries, call Pinky at 822-3221 to 24 or 922-0458 or Subic Bay International Tennis Center at (047) 252-2468.

ASIAN SOFTBALL

Blu Boys, Taiwanese clash today

ALFREDO DIMO Boulder really scores for Blu Boys. JOY NICO

STANDINGS	R	L
Group A		
Japan		
Hong Kong		
Indonesia		
Thailand		
Group B		
Philippines		
Chinese Taipei		
India		
Iran		

TODAY'S GAMES (Manila time)
8 a.m.—Indonesia vs. Thailand
9 a.m.—Chinese Taipei vs. Iran
11 a.m.—Hong Kong vs. Japan

THE REAL battle for the Philippine Blu Boys begins today.

After clobbering India with another 10-0 win and 7-0 rout pummeling the Filipinos will be finally tested by Chinese Taipei today in the 7th Asian men's softball championship at the Rizal Memorial ballpark.

Both undefeated in Group B, the Blu Boys and the Taiwanese collide at 1 p.m. in what is actually a showdown for the top spot in the bracket.

"Its my lucky no hitter (This is the real contest)," said RP head coach Reynaldo Dela Cruz Hernandez.

The Indians showed up with a respectable pitcher but they were no match for the Filipinos, who had earlier clobbered Iran with a similar five inning 7-0 rout.

Chinese Taipei posted its second straight win with an 8-1 blanking of Iran to move into the inner seeding as the Asian qualifying for the 2004 World Championships in Christchurch, New Zealand.

The Taiwanese are considered as the only threat to an expected Philippine-Japan showdown for the title.

But Hernandez likes the Blu Boys' chances.

"Our first two wins were actually in preparation for our game against Chinese Taipei. I think we have a good chance against the Taiwanese," he said.

Florante Ivanna, a member of the Zamboanga City squad that won the National Softball Open last year, limited the Indians to a single hit while striking out nine. He issued two walks.

First baseman Mark Ryndon blasted a two-run homer in the fifth inning and went 3-for-3 for the Blu Boys.

As dominant as the host country was Japan, which thumbed Indonesia, 11-0, for its second straight win.

The Japanese are currently tied with Hong Kong, a 2-0 winner over Thailand later in the day in Group A.

Raptors acquire Rose from Bulls

TORONTO—The Toronto Raptors have acquired forward Alvin Rose from the Chicago Bulls in a six-player deal that cleared the middle offense until the NBA office reopens on Monday, according to reports on Christmas.

The long rumored deal will take Rose, forward Donyell Marshall and forward Lindsay Beasley to Toronto for veteran powers forward Antonio Davis, forward Jerome Williams and rookie guard Chris Jefferies.

The Raptors held Davis and Williams out of their game on Saturday night in Miami, while Jefferies is on the team's injured list.

Both the Pacers 500, the Raptors trade forward and rookie, and Spoelstra, the television station that carries many of their games, expressed the proposed deal on Saturday. Reuters

Iverson hits 50 as Sixers down Hawks

PHILADELPHIA—Allen Iverson scored a season-high 50 points Saturday to lead the Philadelphia 76ers to a 98-88 victory over the Atlanta Hawks.

Produced by a Ra. Iverson had a season-low 12-point performance on Friday in which he missed 15 of 19 shots in a season high.

"I didn't feel better, but I was rested," Iverson said of Saturday's performance.

It was the ninth time, including playoffs, that Iverson has scored 50 or more points in his eight seasons. He had 55 in a playoff victory over New Orleans last April.

"He was phenomenal," Sixers coach Randy Ayers said. "He really needed it."

Kenny Thomas had 12 rebounds and reserve John Salmons added 13 points for Philadelphia, which leads the Atlantic Division despite a 9-9 record.

Jason Terry led Zeljko Jovanovic and Shareef Abdur-Rahim had 17 for the Hawks, who are off to a 6-11 start.

In New York, Allan Houston scored 28 points, and Shawnelle Mcmillan added 13 points, 12 rebounds and five blocks to help New York beat New Orleans, 76-74.

Mcmillan got the Knicks started with 11 points and seven rebounds in the first half, but Houston scored 13 during a sluggish second half for both teams. AP

Complete results: New York 76, New Orleans 74; Philadelphia 98, Atlanta 88; Detroit 85, Washington 80; Memphis 102, Cleveland 115; (OT); Miami 79, Toronto 68; Dallas 102, Minnesota 83; Milwaukee 103, Boston 101; Seattle 92, Golden State 89; Indiana 108, San Antonio 83; Denver 98, LA Clippers 88.

Bailey posts record 70 stakes victories

NEW YORK—Jerry Bailey won three stakes races at Aqueduct on Saturday for a record 70 stakes victories this season.

Bailey rode Congaree to victory in the Grade 1 $500,000 Cigar Mile, lead the Wolfender to first in the Grade 1 $500,000 Sysonby Mile and Jalnado to the win in the Grade 2 $200,000 Stonerside Stakes.

Bailey's 70 stakes victories surpassed the previous mark of 69, established by Mike Smith in 1994.

"It's a load off my back," Bailey said of the record. "I'm glad to get it over with."

Congaree beat Aldiza Ryan by 1 1/4 lengths for a second straight win in the Cigar Mile this season after finishing first in the 3-year-old by the 1993 Breeders Cup Juvenile winner, Arazi.

It was also Bailey's fourth winning ride in the Cigar. In addition to wins with Congaree, he won the mile Cigar himself in 1994, with Jolie Slew in 1998 and with El Corredor in 2000.

Conceding from one to eleven pounds to his rivals, Congaree carried 114 pounds and covered the mile in 1:31 1/5 over the fast track to earn $218,000 for Stonerside Stables.

"I talked to Jerry (Bailey) yesterday and he told me he might have to use Congaree, and I told him to go ahead and do what he had to do," trainer Bob Baffert said in a telephone interview. "He turned very well since the Breeders' Cup and he was very sharp.

"When you start from top riders, you have to be careful on Congaree. He's so difficult going across fast-stage and a mile."

Congaree paid $3.20, $2.60 and $2.20. Mellie Eyes returned $4.60 and $3.80, and Tweed paid $5.60 to show.

Adriadne beat Ja Rules by a nose, covering the 1 1/8 miles in 1:53 3/5 to win $125,000 for Ironsight Stables. It was the fourth win in nine starts for the filly by Saint Ballado.

Bailey's record-breaking ride comes aboard Royal the Percentage, who came from just off the pace to register a 1 3/4-length victory in the Bonnie Heiser for 2-year-olds. AP

BAILEY It's a load off my back.

Royal Catch steals show . . .

From page A12

"Pagsugpo sa sitio, alam kong malaki ang pondo. If know he had a big chance of winning when we reached the homestretch," said Zarate, who rode a neck back piloted Wind Blown to a fantastic victory in the 8th Manila Standard Cup Classic.

Runnerup to the talented young jock the jamaw only on the last race and never up close to settle for second spot, while Sarsia (Another Indiana) arrived another length back in third. Staunch Ally (Fernandez/Bolts Jr.) finished fourth then came Windlass (Jonathan Hernandez) and fourteen Chaos (Lyndon Gante). Good of 42 runs in front ahead.

Royal Catch, only the fifth choice in the betting, was brought by Bejarano along with Real Boss, another import whose regular pedal would also make winner facts.

Conditioned by Hector Mumaneng, Royal Catch covered the race in 1:42 flat (19-24-23-20). It was his second win in five starts this ha.

Staunch Ally's owner, Manila president Adolfo "Butch" Pajaul, was earning those who congratulated Esguerra after Royal Catch prevailed.

"In a few more months she will be fully adjusted and I think she'll be hard to beat," said Pajaul of Royal Catch.

Ruales, Metrical Shaker 10-racing Metrostar Rhinestones) emerged the top candidates for the Presidential Gold Cup by-calling The Japan Racing Association Cup, while Imperio Bonanza's Davao Knight-Josephites triumphed in the Philippines-Japan Friendship Cup.

Tap Dance City captures Japan Cup

TOKYO—Tap Dance City, one of the outsiders, romped to victory and the first prize of 256 million yen (US2.3 million) in the Japan Cup on Sunday.

Ridden by Tetsuo Ito, Tap Dance City built a huge lead and held off the running to triumph by nine lengths.

The first five pairs this year were all named to Japan-to-the-bone sidewinded challengers from England, France, the US and Australia. Tap Dance City held the 3rd position on the 11th-crowded course and overall best. Reuters

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SPORTS

Royal Catch steals show in PSA Cup

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The Pineda Hair Clinics

By Edwin Villanueva

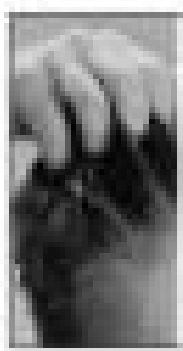
IMPORTED filly Royal Catch put her blinding speed to great use to outclass the field yesterday in the 2003 Philippine Sportswriters Association (PSA) Cup at the San Lazaro Leisure Park in Carmona, Cavite.

Ridden expertly by Jutfil Jarum, the 4-year-old mare bucked early pressure from Southern Charm then weathered a late charge by top pick Dandaway to win the one-mile event by a length.

Aired by Kings' Theatre out of Down the Chick, Royal Catch picked up P168,000 after taking the race held in honor of the late Rudy Navarro.

"This win is for Tito Rudy. I know he's happy wherever he is now," said Jarum, referring to the former Tempo sports editor who was himself an avid turfenthusiast.

Royal Catch, acquired by Jarum's bet mogul from the Willow Inglis & Sons Ltd. in Sydney through Hadji Alcover Ramon Bautista, sliced off Southern Charm entering the last turn and sweeped the home turn enjoying a four-length lead.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Editor Raul D. Morallo
Assistant Editor Connie S. Moreno

BSP, SEC to jointly oversee money changers

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas and the Securities and Exchange Commission have agreed to jointly monitor the operations of money changers and new bank remittance centers to help plug all potential outlets for money laundering in the financial system.

BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said the central bank would regulate these firms while the SEC would supervise them. The committee should end the confusion among more than 1,000 money shops and remittance centers as to which agency would oversee their operations.

The BSP and the SEC are both members of the Anti-Money Laundering Council, the group monitoring and investigating money-laundering cases.

Regulation of money changers will boost the Philippines' bid to earn yes-to-finally get out of the Financial Action Task Force's list of economies still weak in fighting money laundering.

"We will only regulate them, not supervise," Buenaventura said, adding that the BSP and the SEC would have to "make a clear distinction between regulation and supervision."

As a regulator, Buenaventura explained that the BSP would have to "make sure that the industry is adhering to guidelines on reporting," particularly on suspicious transactions, as defined under the Anti-Money Laundering Act or AMLA.

On the other hand, SEC will take the supervisory responsibility, which Buenaventura explained involves the examination of their financial statements.

The BSP chief said the central bank was finalizing the draft circular that would define the reporting requirements of money changers in relation to suspicious transactions.

The classification of money changers based on "capital, resources and volume of transactions" would be one of the salient features of the circular, he said.

The BSP had outlined a tighter licensing, regulation and monitoring of money changers as these businesses all over the world have been suspected of hiding money coming from illegal activities.

Shipbuilding industry finds hub in Cebu

By Doris C. Dumlao

BALAMBAN, Cebu—This idyllic inland, which is two hours' drive from metropolitan Cebu, has emerged as a hub for the Philippines' pioneering shipbuilding industry producing world-class sea vessels for export.

Two shipbuilding companies, Philippine Bulkcarrier Marine Inc. and Trasmedi Heavy Industries Inc., are currently beefing up their capacity to meet higher demand. The combined investors of these companies—which are separate joint ventures between the Abadia group and two foreign principals—are projected to exceed $90 million by next year.

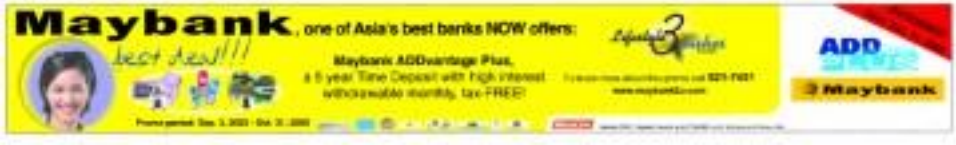
Philbit Bunkering for new vessels tightened when the Asian crisis erupted in 1997, demand from the global market was quite picking up, said Allen Abadia, who is in charge of Abadia Trading Ventures Inc.'s shipbuilding ventures.

FEATURE

Philbit Bulkcarrier Marine Inc. is a 50-50 joint venture with Hyundai Bulkcarrier Pte. Ltd. of Singapore, while TRI is a 30-70 venture with Trasmedi of Japan, with the controlling stake owned by the latter.

The Abadia-Bulkcarrier ventures, which last logged a new contract

WEST Cebu Industrial Park, home to the country's only shipbuilding facility.



BSP chief sees OFW remittance hitting $8B in 2004

By Clarissa S. Batino

DOLLAR inflow from eight million Filipinos working overseas is expected to hit $8 billion in 2004 as the improving global economy creates more and better job opportunities for nurses, IT experts, seafarers, teachers, caregivers and other professionals, according to Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura.

"I think we could still manage to increase our OFW remittance next year by about 5 percent. This would bring us to $8 billion by the end of 2004," the BSP governor said in an interview.

This year, the central bank adjusted its outlook on offshore workers' remittances to a 6-percent growth from a flat growth forecast during the height of the U.S.-Iraq war. A 6-percent growth should bring to $7.6 billion by year's end from $7.2 billion in 2003.

As of September, Filipinos overseas have sent home $5.39 billion to their families here.

The central bank had estimated that more than $5 billion in OFW remittances passing through informal channels like couriers and money changers were not being booked by the government.

Buenaventura is not worried that deployment of OFWs this year had been declining.

As of September, deployment had dropped by 5.6 percent to only 660,413 Filipinos left for employment abroad against 726,459 in the first three quarters of 2002. This, even as the number of Filipino seafarers overseas rose by 2.2 percent to 162,581 from 157,152 a year ago.

"I think our board members would continue to increase while the land-based would pick-up. We are hoping to send more nurses and other Filipinos to high-er paying jobs which should not only improve their status but also allow them to send more money to their families," the BSP chief said.

The BSP is counting on higher OFW remittances this year to offset the slowdown in foreign direct investments and sluggish exports.

Buenaventura said the central bank had been seeing an increasing amount of dollar inflow from OFWs. Remittance is expected to pick up in the fourth quarter as offshore workers send money to pay for various fees in October and for the Christmas festivities in the last two months.

The BSP pointed out that the slow down in the deployment of land-based workers affected income since overseas workers like domestic helpers as the number of caregivers, engineers, performing artists and other high-paying jobs actually increased.

Dollar remittances form part of the country's current account, a big component of the balance of payments reflecting movements in trade.

The labor department is targeting to deploy a million Filipinos abroad. In 2002, the POEA said the level of double hired and re-hired reached 893,568 versus 867,389 the previous year.

Foreign exchange inflow from overseas workers comprises nearly 85 percent of the country's gross earnings. It normally accounts for the actual and a percentage point difference between the gross domestic product and the gross national product.

Commercial banks export about 65 percent of total remittances while foreign exchange firms export 1.6 percent of the total. The data on the remaining 3 percent come from offshore banking units.

BSP . . .

Previous page A1

ing windows for illegally acquired funds. The so-called "launder" system to Islamic countries is also under the lights search of the BSP.

"The essence of regulating money changers is to restrict to the reporting of suspicious and covered transactions under the AMLA," Bangko Sentral governor Buenaventura said in Zamboanga.

Covered transactions under the AMLA involve an amount exceeding P500,000 within one banking day. Suspicious transactions may involve any amount provided there seems to be no underlying legal or trade obligation for the transaction.

Under the law's implementing rules, covered institutions must report to the Council all suspicious transactions within five working days from their occurrence.

Another official said the BSP could also include in the regulation the informal channels through which some overseas Filipino workers send money to their families.

"Some are then involved money changers operating in the country's underside would like to regulate and supervise only the big ones, for instance the top 200 on the basis of capitalization and volume of business. Then really operate in Binondo and Ermita.

Money shops that are not subsidiaries or affiliate of banks are only required to submit incorporation papers to the SEC and obtain a permit from the municipality or city where they operate.

Supervision over the non-bank money shops was removed from the central bank by the New Central Bank Act of 1993 as well as the liberalization of the country's foreign exchange market.

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Out of the (shoe)box

If you are a mall rat grown tired by sardines-like crowds and price-gouging yet equally opulent carparks, then you would love the new SM mall in Marilao, Bulacan.

Despite being located in the rural-urban tangle of towns lining up the decrepit Manila-Bus Highway, the Marilao mall has wider aisles and taller ceilings than the flagship SM Megamall's.

Nothing is loud and plentiful, and, as the car park in the open expanse surrounding the Marilao mall, just like a typical American mall, there are no 20-minute waits just to get in line, go through a security check, and circle around for an elusive slot that can oblige shoppers have to go through every time they go to Makati and Ortigas carparks.

Like the new Ilili Bagnio, the two-story Marilao mall breaks away from the fortress shoebox design—rows of light-advertising claustrophobia-the structure—that for so long has passed as be-it-cost-and-energy efficient design for the SM chain.

The new mall's outside walls are also liberally splashed with candy and earth colors, unlike the gray, concrete slab that shoppers long associated with SM.

And, in an area that has yet to see modern plumbing and dependable water supply, the Marilao mall, a veritable mini-city has flushing toilets. Even the water lasers flow in a gushes compared to the trickle from the store's town faucets of Greenhill 3 theaters.

SM Tech Vision by said the mall engineers had to dig rare underground wells to source the water, and build an underground treatment-recycling plant to ensure 24/7 supply, before any effluents are discharged—the SM engineers also had to design and lay the sewage pipes themselves—to the nearest river-half a kilometer away.

For those who have not seen Marilao-Bus Highway in ages, that corridor has long been in rural chaos and is now clogged with a Sampaloc-like density of sidewalk-less shops and squalid, grimy houses.

From these ocean open west of just-built carparks, suddenly nearly a kilometer-long frontage of open space and lines of neon-swellings pop out. That is the contrast that the new Marilao mall has provided to the jumbled neighborhood. In a country bereft of parks, the malls have become air-conditioned Luneta.

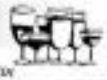
Despite being set in a tech town, the consumerized point-of-sale terminals of the new mall have the latest, cutting-edge technology. The rows of POS terminals lining up the SM Hypermart all have the LCD screens, a technological leap for a town whose fringes are still dotted with rice farms and chickens roaming the fields.

On the macroeconomic level, the POS terminals are heaven-sent to revenue-strapped government cashiers. These machines channel to the formal, taxable economy what had hitherto been confined within the underground, cash-pinipig economy.

All those previously unreported small spending and OPM monies will now be tracked by the mall's supermarket, shops, and fast foods whose computerized records, unlike the cash basis of commission groceries and sari-sari stores, may now be cross-checked by the BIR and city hall.

No wonder then that Marilao Mayor Leonilo Diaz Jr. was elated by the mall opening. Not only did he get an urban renewal project for free, the mayor can look forward to a wider tax base, a larger budget, and a bigger war chest.

COCKTALES



Victor C. Aguatin

Roco's dark side

RACS boss grouches at transparency and corporate governance. But his lure flies has once again run afoul with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Roco's partner, Lorna Kapunan, who is vice president for legal affairs of the Baguio Country Club, and Roco's junior lawyers crammed through a stockholders' meeting of the BCC on Nov. 6 despite an order from the SEC restraining it for two 28.

The SEC had been aghast to discover that more than half of the management proxies being kept by Kapunan and corporate secretary Victoria de los Reyes were either blank, filled in pencil or had no corresponding validation.

To ensure that no foul play would be contrived, the SEC ordered a resetting of the meeting to Nov. 28, so that all contending parties would have time to revalidate the proxies and at least agree on the validity of the ballots.

What do you know? Despite the presence of an SEC team from Manila, the BCC lawyers, prompted by BCC chair Ilgi. Rodolfo Albano, and BCC president, ex-Philippine Star Associate. president Federico Aguinaldi, pushed through with the meeting and re-elected themselves using the questioned proxies.

With their patience again tested, SEC Chair Lilia Bautista and the three other female commissioners last week nullified the Nov. 6 amendment to nullify the club term as a non-stock corporation while another stockholders' suit is being prepared to question the validity of the same meeting.

Only the three male members, Brother Eddie Villanueva's nominee, Jesus Enrique Reyes, cast the lone dissenting vote among the SEC commissioners.

Dunding's fingerprints

THE INC consultant sued by Iran Miguel president Simeon Ang in his fight with the Supreme Court over the Cybelles-Amari issue were all over the Manila Hotel during actor Fernando Poe Jr.'s announcement of his presidential candidacy.

And as was Iran Miguel director, fending boxster Carmelita Sanchez of the Melo's comeback fame.

Heard through the grapevine

DOHA Chair Madrigal's favorite nephew-in-law, investment banker Jose Fernando Tolosa, has been issued a hold-departure order by Makati RTC Judge Salvador Marinas as a result of the estafa case filed by the unpaid investors of the failed East Asia Capital.

(Cocktales may be reached by e-mail at cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com or at cocktales_pdi@hotmail.com.)

Chinese firm expresses interest to reopen National Steel plant

By Michelle V. Ramos

ANOTHER foreign company this time from China, has expressed interest to reopen the mothballed National Steel Corp., Iligan City Mayor Franklin Quijano has announced.

Quijano, without identifying the Chinese firm, said in press briefing last week that the Chinese firm is was hoping it would still be entertained by the banks and the government despite failing to submit a bid before the Sept. 30 deadline.

The firm, according to Quijano, was willing to build various alternatives with the government and the creditor-banks of NSC should their talks with the other foreign bidder, Global Steel Holdings Ltd., fail.

NSC creditor banks, headed by Philippine National Bank, have granted a 90-day exclusive talks with GSHL after the latter submitted a bid price of P13 billion, which was higher than the P7 billion of the only other bidder, LNM Holdings.

Quijano said the government was not closing its doors on the other parties interested to run NSC, whose steel plant is located in Iligan City.

He said, however, that creditor banks could not promise greater chances for the two other interested parties because talks with GSHL were running smoothly so far. He added that the government and the banks wanted NSC to be reopened as soon as possible.

Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II earlier said the government expected NSC's rehabilitation to begin as early as March 2004 should creditor-banks and GSHL sign a deal within the 90-day period that started two weeks ago.

The local government of Iligan, Quijano said, has promised to waive off part of the P600 million in real property tax owed by NSC to the Iligan City government to help hasten NSC's reopening.

However, Quijano said the local government wanted to ensure that the winning bidder would be dedicated to run NSC for the long term, and that it would invest sufficient amount for the rehabilitation of its facilities.

"We don't want to be writing off debt only to find out later that the plant will close down after a year or two of operations," he said.

As the Chinese firm entered the picture, LNM Holdings said it was willing to improve its P7-billion offer should the talks with GSHL fail.

LNM operations manager Eric Then said in a recent press briefing the company was willing to counterbalance the payoff-sharing scheme included in its bid now an amount that could be added to its original P7-billion offer.

Petron bags fuel supply contracts worth ₱1.1B

By Ronnel W Domingo

NATIONAL Power Corp. has awarded oil giant Petron Corp. two supply contracts worth about P1.1 billion for the fuel needs of two oil-fired power plants.

In an interview, a Napocor official said the contracts were awarded to Petron after the power firm's board of directors reviewed the results of the bidding conducted in November.

The contracts covered additional industrial fuel oil (IFO) supplies needed to run the 620-megawatt combined cycle power plant in Limay, Bataan and the 100-MW Sabit plant in Zambales for the remainder of the year.

The Bataan contract covers the supply and delivery of 91,247 kiloliters of IFO, while the Sabit contract calls for 12,535 kiloliters.

Napocor has a budget of P1.05 billion for Bataan and P137.9 million for Sabit.

"The actual value of the contracts are lower than the approved budgets and the original bids of Petron," the official said.

The source explained that since Petron was the only qualified bidder that submitted bids, Napocor negotiated for further discounts while the oil firm granted.

The official was unable to give specifics as the information were not available at press time.

Also last month, Napocor bid out five more contracts worth a total of about P600 million.

Bidding officials said Petron submitted the best bids for four contracts while Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. offered the best bid for one.

However, the official said the Napocor management had not finalized post bidding evaluation.

Next week, the state firm is awarding off contracts worth a total of about P9.771 billion for the fuel supply needs of its oil-based power plants and barges in 2004.

The contracts call for the supply and delivery of a total of 77,213 kiloliters of diesel or DL delivery plants and barges all over the country.

They also call for supplies of 725,831 kiloliters of industrial fuel oil (IFO) to 21 power plants and barges.

The bellyaching band of BANGON!

THE AD on the crawlerlids of the major dailies last week that launched a movement called BANGON was a masterpiece of bellyaching.

The ad lists four causes of the supposed collapse of the Filipino dream for greatness. First, the leadership since Ignacio three to subservience to foreign interests failed miserably by ignoring the masses. Second, our population invaded from just 16 million to 82 million today; we cannot adequately feed an estimated 30.46 million already grovelling in hunger. Third, our neo-liberal law-mads, free enterprise economy theory extrafamily from America and Europe has come apart. Fourth, the elite dominated to enhance our citizenry; it failed to give the Filipino the tools, the opportunity to acquire knowledge, advanced factory methods.

As to the first cause, who keeps on bellyaching about our colonial past? Those days are long gone. As to the second, if there are too many Filipinos to feed, we just have to find ways of producing cheaper food.

For now, I will skip the third cause. As to the fourth, we have the widest educational system around, public schools up to high school are free.

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Bienvenido C. General

We are the third largest English speaking country next to the US and the UK. We have the highest literacy rate in Asia next to Japan.

We produce 40 billion kilowatts-hour (kWh) of electricity every day. This is not the same as fuel (oil) causes crashing through the floors and to freedom in the West. The Filipinos who go abroad to work (including my son and two daughters) compete successfully for jobs, almost all of them are professionals and technicians. They they send back $7.5 billion in fresh money every year to be spent in groceries and supermarkets. They buy cars, homes and keep the economy moving. They do the Philippines proud.

And what is the solution offered by BANGON? Nationalism or love of country, bourgeois intervention. No foreigners, free market, total liberalization, no globalization.

Which brings me to the third cause: our free trade, free enterprise economy drawn mindlessly from America and Europe has come apart.

The Philippine insurance industry is a good case to study. After World War II, insurance companies sprung up like mushrooms. By the early 1960s, the industry was considered overcrowded. Nationalism banned the licensing of new companies, local or foreign.

At the same time, the insurance cartel, which fixed the prices of fire, marine car and later inland marine insurance, and which had existed for decades, was legitimized. The cartel became the only one in history with a government license. This was the height of government intervention in the insurance business.

Then, in 1994, the insurance industry was liberalized. Foreign companies could come in by any of three doors: put up a wholly-owned subsidiary; open a full-fledged branch, or buy into a domestic company almost overnight. some of the largest life companies from the US, UK, Europe and Japan came in. The number of companies doubled. There were fewer non-life companies that accepted the invitation, which goes to show that a foreigner does not want in just because the door is open.

At any rate, the initial effect of liberalization was to bring in the equivalent of P5 billion in new investments.

At the same time the insurance cartel was broken up. The license was withdrawn and each company was now free to set its own selling prices.

Today, nine years later, in the bright and realistic outlook of a free and open market, the insurance industry is as vigorous as it has never been before.

The consumer benefits most of all. There is a dizzying array of new products, especially in life insurance, to choose from at competitive prices. The price of a simple fire insurance policy on a house is about one third what it used to be.

BANGON! sounds protectionist to me. It's an eight, will somebody explain to me why chicken raised outside Manila and sold in open-air public markets costs more than chicken imported from the US, Australia, and even Thailand, and sold in air-conditioned supermarkets? As a result, local chicken raisers enjoy a 40-percent tariff protection at the expense of the Filipino consumer.

Will somebody explain to me why it is rationalistic to manufacture and sell a local product at a price higher than the imported variety. And nonsensical for a Filipino consumer to buy the cheaper imported product, such as canned beef from Argentina.

If local producers have to be protected, why is the Filipino consumer paying for that protection by way of higher prices?

Sure, this country is laced with huge problems, not the least of which is graft and corruption. But globalization or trade liberalization is not one of them. And this country will do better with less bellyaching.

NFA intensifies palay buying

THE NATIONAL Food Authority has allocated P2.7 billion to finance an aggressive palay buying operations as harvests peaked this quarter, NFA administrator Arthur Pigcauli.

Yap has instructed NFA field officers to intensify buying operations and ordered the deployment of additional mobile buying teams in major palay production areas in the country. At present, there are 3,000 teams serving remote areas.

"These procurement teams have also been ordered to go all out in buying the produce of the farmers even beyond regular office hours," he said.

Reacting to reports that palay prices were going down, Yap said the NFA, through its aggressive buying operations, had been pushing prices up.

He admitted that there were cases wherein farmers were unable to avail themselves of the services offered by the NFA.

Farmer organizations who wish to avail of the procurement services of the NFA but are constrained by their limited resources are advised to coordinate with the nearest office of the agency in their respective localities through TXT/SMS at mobile phone number 09175239527.

Yap said that based on the NFA's monitoring and survey on farmers, farmers' cooperatives and private grains traders, the average buying price for clean and dry palay in Nueva Ecija is P9.00 per kg, which approximates the NFA's buying price of P9.00 per kg, plus P0.50 for incentives. In Mindoro, clean and dry palay fetches between P7.00 and P8.25 per kg. Christine A. Vigilante

The Presidency and the economy

NOT should the question of who might emerge as our country's next President matter so much to our currency and stock markets? How could the exchange rate and the stock market index react so swiftly and so negatively to the sole reason that it should matter to the economy who will become our next President. After all, one might argue, our economic life will go on no matter what. Filipinos are well-acknowledged to be quite resilient even through the worst of times. And after last week's positive economic growth numbers reported by the government, it would seem that the social and political turmoil we are going through, some might ask, who worry? It seems that the Philippine economy will manage, no matter what. We will muddle through.

No perfect President

But that's precisely our problem. Muddling through is simply not good enough. We have been muddling through for much too long. We cannot afford to be simply muddling through when those around us are speeding right ahead past us. Thailand, the country most smeared the Asian financial crisis and suffered among its worst setbacks has come back with a vengeance. To this, most observers give primary credit to their current leader, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. Here is a prime example of a leader who, in spite of much political baggage including allegations of corruption, is still able to rally his country to a spectacular recovery.

There is a message here for all of us: it's time we stopped looking for the perfect President. We should, however, make sure that the President we choose will be able to lead us "still beyond" simply muddling through, and into a broad-based and rapid advance of our economy and society. As a people, we should have all learned by now from past experiences with past presidents what kind of President we should not have. On this, I need not elaborate. But more importantly, we should have also learned by now what kind of attitudes we as a people should not have as well. For, as many people intuit, we Filipinos are slow learners—if we learn it at all.

Nationalism is the key

Many of us have read that essay making the rounds of the e-mail circuit that was written by a Korean observer, arguing that the main thing wrong with the Philippines and the Filipinos is that we don't love our country enough. Most of us don't have the same kind of love for country that clever Koreans and Thais from all walks of life so voluntarily give up their gold jewelry to the government in order to clean up their dwindling reserves at the height of the financial crisis. Filipinos, it seems to me, would never even think of doing such a thing. James Fallows wrote that Filipinos have a damaged culture. The damaged culture he was referring to could be summed up in our lack of concern for the common good.

I like to call it the Filipinos' lack of nationalism. But I do not refer to nationalism expressed by some fist-waving to xenophobic patriotism, despising everything foreign. I prefer to define the nationalism we lack as concern as a nation, the lack of ability to place the common good above self-interest. We are a fragmented nation of self-centered individuals, and we know it and even laugh about it. We see it in Filipinos at home, as in carnivals who lane-savvy everyone else by turning a two-centerline lane rather than wait for their turn. We see it in Filipinos abroad, as in the way many overseas Filipino organizations split up repeatedly when elections loom closer and form their own group. We see it in Filipinos rich or poor alike, wherever they may be.

FPJ Presidency: a disaster!

To me, the foremost quality we need in our next President is the ability to exemplify and bring about unity or oneness as a Filipino nation, i.e. nationalism of the right kind. I admired the way I was recruited into the Ramos Cabinet without anyone even bothering to ask me if I had voted for him. In contrast, I know of an extremely qualified candidate for a key position under the Estrada administration who was told outright she could not be chosen because she had failed to campaign (not just vote!) for Mr. Estrada. At times, the fallen President even appeared to be fomenting a class war, when he should have been fostering unity and harmony. That, to me, was the most "un-Presidential" of his faults.

Many people are scared of an FPJ presidency clearly because of that disastrous experience with a similar president. Mr. Poe's biggest political asset, that of being a widely-known actor, is also his biggest liability in the eyes of many—i.e. of belonging to the same profession as the fallen president. Not all his personality good intentions, FPJ's foremost challenge is to prove that he will be everything Mr. Estrada was not. He need not convince us that his values are different from Mr. Estrada's; many people give him credit for that. But he needs to disabuse us of the common perception that he will be easily subject to manipulation or machinations by people with the wrong motivations for gaining power. That seems to be the main thing that leads people to believe that an FPJ presidency will lead to meltdown.

But to those who declare that they would give up hope in the country and migrate to another country in the event of a Poe presidency, I say think again. Keep mind, those who adamantly think of "hauling out" if a President not to their liking is elected (and I am quite sure there is a sizable number among us who do) are very much part, if not a primary cause, of our nation's problems. Citizenship is not a privilege; it is a responsibility. A good President is vital for a good economy. But we are responsible citizens working selflessly for the common good.

(Comments welcome at cbaltao@inicorp.edu)

NO FREE LUNCH

Cielito F. Habito

Gov't lost ₱40B due to failure to reclassify old cigarette brands

By Michelle P. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT has lost some P40 billion in additional revenue due to the failure to reclassify old cigarette brands, the taxes imposed on which were no longer commensurate with their net retail prices.

Former Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, in a letter to House committee on ways and means Chairman Jose Solomon last month, said that, while net retail prices of old cigarette brands had increased since 1998, the finance department could not impose higher taxes on them.

That was because the National Internal Revenue Code did not allow the reclassification of tobacco and alcohol products that were introduced in the market on and before the enactment of the code was implemented in October 1996.

The law says, however, that reclassification of so-called sin products for tax purposes may be done through the passage of a bill in Congress calling for such a move.

Camacho reported that he foresaw "inflation alone (the government lost some P28 billion from the period 1999 to 2002 due to the non-reclassification of its old cigarette brands).

The government also lost P13.17 billion due to the non-reclassification of Philip Morris, and P2.5 billion due to the failure to reclassify both Hennessy and Asgit brands, he added.

The estimated foregone revenue was the reason the DOF has urged Congress to pass a bill that would allow the regular indexation of alcohol and tobacco products based on changes in the net retail prices.

Particularly, the finance department is pushing for the passage of House Bill No. 3037 and No. 4763.

While the DOF could not realize higher revenue from old cigarette brands, the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) has issued revenue regulation No. 22-2003, which imposed higher taxes on new cigarette brands.

New cigarette brands, including Mark and Shanghai of La Tondeña Cigar and Cigarette Factory, are those introduced in the market after the implementation of the revised tax code.

Saying the increase in the rates of new cigarette brands touched to unfair competition, La Tondeña has filed a case calling for the injunction of BIR 22-2003.

Digitel seen spending $260M for telecom expansion in 2004

By Abigail L. Ho

LOGROÑO/MANILA UNITED Digital Telecommunications Philippines Inc. is looking at spending about $260 million for the maintenance and expansion of its fixed line and cellular businesses next year.

"We expect about $200 million in (capital expenditure) for wireless. Hopefully we'll get it below that, but that is the working number for the wireless business. For fixed line, it's minimal. Maybe $10 million to $12 million," Digitel president and chief executive Lance Gokongwei told reporters in a recent interview.

Digitel, through wholly owned subsidiary Digitel Mobile Philippines Inc., is expanding its cellular network by rolling out infrastructure in key areas all over the country.

Involved September, French telecommunications equipment supplier Alcatel had installed 650 cell sites and has to date built the Digitel Mobile all over the country, Gokongwei said.

The Digitel group's year-to-date consolidated capex has reached more than P5 billion. Roughly 85 percent of this area spent for its wireless rollout.

Just recently, Digitel Mobile signed contracts worth $220 million with Alcatel and Ericsson for phases 3 and 4 of its wireless expansion.

Alcatel will take care of rolling out infrastructure in Luzon, while Ericsson will be in charge of putting up cell sites and other facilities in Visayas and Mindanao.

Gokongwei said all these are phases of expansion would bring the number of Digitel Mobile's cell sites to 3,300 upon completion in mid-2004.

These wireless expansion efforts are funded by a combination of issues, supplier's credit and internally generated funds.

For the fixed line side, Gokongwei noted that Digitel sees "basically no borrowing" as its mode where we are making judicious investments in our fixed assets base."

"We are still in our aggressive rollout mode for our wireless business to improve our service coverage and increase our critical mass of subscribers," he said.

PSE plans electronic registration system

By Doris C. Dorcian

THE PHILIPPINE Stock Exchange is in talks with the Securities and Exchange Commission for the introduction of an electronic registration system for stock beneficial to counter double shares in the wake of the Asian Capital Equities Inc. scandal.

The PSE recently discovered various fraudulent trading practices allegedly committed by ACE. For instance, some of the clients' funds and shares of stock were reportedly being used by the brokerage for its own dealer position without the knowledge of the investors.

"For the defense of the beneficiaries, we would like to encourage them to have records of stocks in their names," PSE president Ernest Leung told reporters.

The usual practice at present, Leung said, was that nominees would hold the stocks on behalf of the investors when the shares were lodged with the Philippine Central Depository Inc. This developed as the exchange has moved to scripless trading system.

As such, the stocks were usually in the names of the agents such as brokerage houses or custodian banks who would effectively act as proxies. "Any unscrupulous entity can execute that power without the knowledge of the beneficiary," Leung said.

The solution to this, the PSE president said, was to improve the clearing and settlement system of the local bourse. He said talks with the SEC were underway on an electronic registration system.

Leung said the PSE could adopt a similar model used in India whereby investors are given a choice of whether to go electronic or still receive a hard copy of stock certificates for the vital balances of "cash" and "holdings."

"But you have to pay the price if you choose the hard copy," Leung said, noting that complicating a stock issuance that under the old fashion system was slower compared to electronic scripless.

The PSE is seeking urgent authority to take over Strategic Alliance SCIE, which was slapped with a cease-and-desist order by the SEC for fraud and other violations of the Securities Regulation Code.

The first provision allegedly violated was Sec. 26, which declares it unlawful to engage in anything that operates as a fraud or deceit upon any person.

Another violation cited was that of Sec. 20.2, which cites "fair" and "honest" dealings in securities and provides financial safeguards, including the establishment of minimum capital requirements, acceptance of custody and use of securities of customers and the use of deposits/balance sheets of customers.

PLDT opens network to US telecom firm

By Reena F.W. Domingo

PHILIPPINE Long Distance Telephone Co. said it has fully opened up its network to the United States' Sprint Communications to complement with a government directive to speed up the resolution of cases disputes between local and US carriers.

PLDT senior vice president Alfredo Panlilio said in a statement that the company has fully withdrawn all circuits connecting the PLDT network to that of Sprint's.

Panlilio said that under the present interim agreement with Sprint, the US carrier would provisionally settle all outstanding amounts and pay interim termination fees to PLDT once the US Federal Communications Commission lifted its stop-payment order on PLDT.

"We are confident that the US FCC will issue (its (the) order simply because it would be in the interest of all parties concerned," he said. "We do want to end this long-standing dispute as soon as possible so we can move on to improve our respective businesses."

He said that with continuing negotiations among carriers and the operators to reach mutually agreeable termination rates, it was expected that PLDT and other local carriers would earn fully restore normal business relations with US carriers.

In fact, PLDT and SBC Worldcom International of the United States recently reached an interim agreement on the termination rates and are now accepting calls from both networks.

The term dispute stemmed from a US FCC order dated March 10 that allowed true US carriers to stop paying their Philippine counterparts for receiving calls from their network.

The order was issued in response to AT&T Corp. and MCI's complaints that Philippine carriers were engaged in whipsawing, or pitting US carriers against one another to get better deals.

Last week, Globe Telecom Inc. said it had signed an interim agreement with MCI which it said would provide a basis for rates that would ease the flow of direct traffic between the Globe and MCI networks.

Stocks seen to weaken

From page B-1

amid the growing political tensions, trading may have a negative tone next week," Vitan said last week.

The analyst, however, may see a limited downside in oversold issues as investors may start to accumulate the more fundamentally sound issues, Vitan said.

He pointed out that the market's weakness over the past three weeks has opened up bargains to come issues and should encouraged investors to nibble some issues. Among the more favored ones are Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., SM Prime Holdings, First Philippine Holdings and Globe Telecom Inc.

Meanwhile, JPMorgan said that investors were waiting for the platforms of the various candidates and, in the meantime, would likely stay on the sidelines to watch how the presidential race shapes up between now and January.

"The market remains vulnerable. It needs a series of good news to help lift market sentiment," JPMorgan said.

Elena R. Trevijano

Canadian driller raising $2.7M to develop Cebu field

By Ronnel W. Domingo

A CANADIAN petroleum firm said it was planning to raise $2.7 million (about P149 million) for the development of a natural gas field discovered recently in northern Cebu.

Larry Yousil, president and chief executive of Philippine Energy Corp., said in a statement the company was in talks with owners to convert to complete a possible private placement and issuance of convertible notes to raise the amount.

"The private placement will likely consist of up to 6 million units at $0.25, with each consisting of one share and one three-year share-purchase warrant, as well as up to $500,000 of five-year, 8-percent convertible notes," Yousil said.

The official explained that the notes could be converted into PEC shares at $0.35 per share.

Yousil said earlier that the Nasdaq-listed company had also listed on the Berlin and Frankfurt stock exchanges following a gamble of interest in PEC's Service Contract 46 covering exploration activities in the Philippines.

"The proceeds (of the private placement) would be used as further working capital and for the development of the Mayo Gas Field," he said.

Drilling upon bids

testing in October on the Potenciana exploration well, PEC's local unit Potenciana Exploration Inc. reported a gas flow of 237,000 standard cubic feet today.

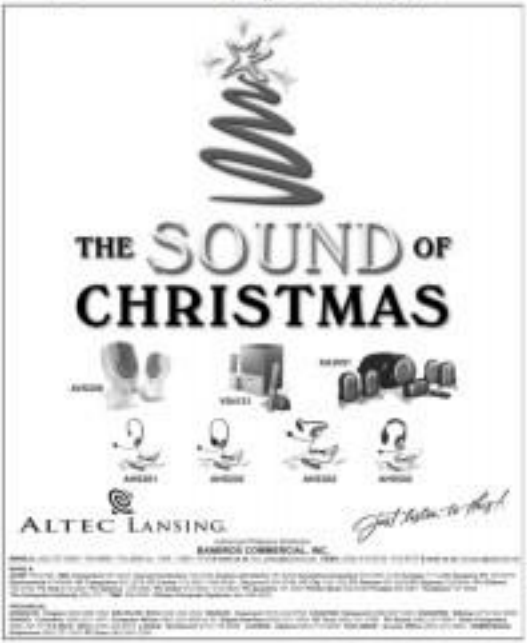
Last week, the Department of Energy said PEC was preparing for wireline logging activities on the recently drilled Potenciana-IX well.

"Once logging is completed we will be able to provide a revised estimate on the overall potential reserves of the Mayo field," Yousil said.

He added that the first Potenciana-IX was drilled, reaches seven pegged at 1,806 million barrels of oil and 14 cubic feet of gas, "with upside potential for additions to reserves as we conduct further exploration of the area."

Yousil had said PEC drillings have shown indications of a significant gas reserve island of Cebu, with commercial potential to contribute to the growing power and energy needs of the province.

PEC is the sole operator of Service Contract No. 46, which covers the northern half of Cebu Island and a large section of the Visayan Sea.



BSP sees peso stabilizing at 55-$1 this month

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas says the peso is expected to fall to 55 to $1 this month as reports that the increasing dollar inflow from overseas Filipino workers will offset the pressure on the currency brought about by political uncertainties.

BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said that with the volatile political landscape aggravated by weak exports, the central bank would embark on a comprehensive review of the country's economic targets for 2004 to determine the realistic levels of exchange rate, dollar reserves, external payments and economic growth next year.

"All the conditions for next year have to be reviewed especially in the context of export growth. We have to get a good handle of the exports to determine the appropriate level of the peso, the reserves, current account and balance of payments. Exports also affect the level of GDP growth," said the BSP chief in an interview.

Political uncertainties have driven away foreign direct investment this year and the trend is expected to continue in the coming year, according to the central bank governor.

"We are not banking much on FDIs although we could still see some portfolio investments coming in. We have about $300 million this year so I think we will have the same next year. What is also important to watch out for is the economic growth in the United States and whether we will benefit from it," said Buenaventura.

The BSP is no stranger with exporters either this month or next to first up the export numbers for 2003.

"I think the peso will improve this month because we are seeing dollars coming in from overseas workers. I don't think we will have any more surprises from now until the end of the year," said the BSP chief.

Buenaventura agreed with currency traders that the peso would be range-bound for this week as banks and investors wait for the smoke to clear before taking any position.

The peso closed at a fresh all-time low of 55.73 last Friday although the trading ranged only from 55.70 to 55.74. The last all-time-low, it fell to a historic low of 55.65, largely in reaction to Bernardo Poe Jr.'s announcement of his candidacy, but closed at 55.69.

While traders said sentiment could deteriorate more over politicians like first candidates, Buenaventura said the increasing certainty of who would run in the coming elections should help the rate, particularly when presidential candidates start laying down their economic platforms.

A government source said that political noise could weaken the local currency by at least a peso in the months leading to the May presidential polls.

Traders said the 56-$1 level is just several months away and could be easily breached with another major political development.

In the last two weeks, the peso had reacted strongly to the resignation of Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho's office boy, a resulting from Mayette's attorney Revelor that it could downgrade the country's credit rating and the's debt status of his presidential bid.

Even typhoons don't come anymore

By Miguel del Rosario

LAST Nov. 21, I was again a participant in the annual Asian Management Conference organized by Thailand's largest conglomerate, The Siam Cement Group. The morning was divided into two parts—the first being the presentation of the Asian growth outlook, while the second was the traditional annual performance report card of the group by Siam Cement CEO, president Chumpol Nalamlieng.

Let me give you a snapshot of Mr. Chumpol's report before I dwell on my main text. Without going to specifics, The Siam Cement Group, together with its subsidiaries, is presently Asia's largest fortune 500 company, in terms of sales, assets and financial ratios, as it is now out of the red and is poised to take on more challenges for further expansion. The current year will the group profits far greater than pre-crisis levels of 1996; they are now stronger than ever. And this is not the only company in Thailand that can claim such feats. There are not of the trends. This is a reason to be really jealous.

Asian growth outlook

The earlier part of the morning was the presentation of the region's economic outlook by leading economist Dr. James Walker, Jr. Walker specializes on Asian economies, particularly that of the Asian region. This gentleman gathered statistics from 1992 to 2003 to establishing trends and patterns of economic development from Japan, China, Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines and our other neighbors.

Some of the items he mentioned were the similarities of the economic development patterns of Japan from 1945 to 1970 and to China from 1990 to 2003. He also took note of Korea on its way to being a powerhouse in two to three years. And of course China, with most policy reforms implemented in the last two years, is now even more competitive and investor-friendly. Dr. Walker also said that with the minimal growth in the US, EU and Japan, the net beneficiaries in terms of growth would be the Asian region as evidenced by the indicators he had gathered. According to Dr. Walker, this Asian region is looking good in the next three to four years unfortunately with the exception of two countries—Indonesia and the Philippines. At this point, admittedly, I wanted to kick under my seat for obvious reasons.

Laggard in Asia

Among the many power point slides he presented was the Index on Asian Consumption Trends. The table showed general improvement in consumption for the period between February 2003 and November 2003, with China, Taiwan, India, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Hong Kong all showing improvements in consumption. Only two countries showed reduced consumption, Thailand from a score of 110 to 116 and the Philippines from 102 to 101.

And to think that in Dr. Walker's encounter slide, he showed Thailand with a predicted GDP of 8.1 percent and elementa decreased growth of 16.6 percent for 2004.

However, it also showed that the Philippines will only have a 4.5 percent GDP and domestic Demand Growth of only 2.9 percent.

So Dr. Walker, there are two countries of great concern, Indonesia and the Philippines. Both are plagued with political uncertainties and corruption, he even characterized the Philippines as on its way to a collision course.

Excuse me for the break. I found myself with fat rain Guessing trying to enlighten Dr. Walker with the reforms the government had been undertaking, we were trying to control the damage. But damage has been done, and this is on image from the outside. I don't need to dwell further, I think I have gotten my point across. Dr. Walker, you are not alone! And I don't blame anyone else but the leadership and the politicians of our country.

Sick political culture

The whole political culture is sick, and it doesn't seem to matter to him/her anymore. Why? Because yet we have a person who has a kind word to say about our politicians, the very leaders of our state and only country. Our leaders and government officials are simply not leaders, they are not statesmen. That is the perception and perception is truth. Dr. Walker said that in 1960 the Philippines was richer than Japan. He says he hasn't seen a country that has successfully driven itself to being one of the poorest countries in just about 30 years.

No wonder foreign investments have almost vanished in a hall, business is down, the quality of tourism that come out of guns. Groaable character. It is so sad, haven't you noticed, even typhoons don't come anymore!

(The author is vice president for marketing of United Pulp and Paper Co., which was recently acquired by the Siam Cement Group from Filinvest.)

Microsoft sees 10% growth

By Abigail L. Ho

MICROSOFT Philippines, the local unit of software giant Microsoft Corp., sees a 10 percent growth in revenue for fiscal year ending June 2004. For the first half of its current financial year, incoming Microsoft Philippines managing director Antonio Javier said.

In a briefing over the weekend, Javier said that the company had likewise posted a 19-percent growth in revenue in the last two years, a new one-more competitive and investor-friendly.

"We are very much pleased with the growth figures, considering that the market condition is modest enough. We actually see a stronger showing but with this being an election year, we decided to adopt a more conservative figure," he said.

He attributed the revenue growth to the 37-percent performance improvement in the **incentive space**, covering large corporate clients.

From July up to the present, the company had forged four new enterprise agreements with new clients, including SSS, Lotte Thai, Pag-Ibig Fund and Philamlife.

Javier noted that the number of enterprise agreements served as a barometer for the company's overall performance.

These agreements are usually slightly long terms in nature, lasting for at least three years.

Microsoft Philippines has its share of businesses across the board, including government, finance, manufacturing, media, telecommunications and retail.

Research and consultancy firm Accenture is currently using Microsoft technology for its **internal applications**.

The company also provided the regulatory compliance solutions for Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' reports to be handed out by Ernst **Ybon Banks as well as maintenance services solu**tions for the Philippine National Bank.

GMA Network Inc. is using some mobility solutions through Microsoft's Office System, while retail ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp. has deployed the software provider's enterprise management solutions.

Just last Friday, Microsoft's MSN announced a partnership with dominant carrier Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. for the local version of the MSN portal.

For the second half of the fiscal year, Microsoft Philippines will focus on improving its relationships with its partners and customers.

Gov't saves ₱10B in interest payments

By Clarissa S. Batino

DESPITE rising interest rates following the July 27 failed military uprising, the government managed to register almost ₱10 billion in interest payment savings in the first 10 months of the year, the Bureau of Treasury said.

National Treasurer Roberto Tan said that from January to October, the government was able to save ₱9.9 billion in interest payments on foreign and domestic borrowings.

For the year, the government had set aside P120.7 billion for interest payments but it now banking on favorable domestic rates to bring the level down.

A better grip on the fiscal sector allowed the government to contain the budget deficit at P103.88 billion or roughly P8 billion lower than the target in the first 10 months.

Edcor said that despite political uncertainties that could have pushed domestic interest rates up, the cost of government borrowings from the local market had remained reasonable.

The benchmark 91-day treasury bill rate used by banks in pricing loans crossed the 6-percent mark and averaged at 6.332 percent a week ago from 5.966 percent a month ago. Still, the bellwether rate is much lower than the government's program of 8.9 percent.

Edcor credited the government's ability to keep the budget deficit in check for the savings. As of August, the savings stood at P7 billion when the three-month treasury rate was only at about 5.6 percent.

Savings from interest payments are usually used to offset increases in spending. Spending during the first 10 months have already exceeded the target by 4 percent.

Domestic interest rates were volatile in the first quarter due to external and internal concerns like the Iraq war, a weak peso and the imposition of the 10 percent value-added tax on financial services that saw confusion among market players.

By the second quarter, however, rates eased as sellers until banks started asking for a higher rates on their placements following the July 27 failed mutiny and political concerns.

NBI steps up drive vs illegal use of Nickelodeon characters

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

AMERICAN entertainment giant Viacom is managing down on Philippine companies that are using its high-selling Nickelodeon characters such as "Blues Clues" and "Tugstar" to sell their wares without consent.

Viacom, through its Philippine legal counsel, Sycip Salazar Hernandez and Gatmaitan of the International Bureau of Intellectual Property Rights Division (NBI-IPRD) is to step up its clamp down on illegal users of its Nickelodeon characters used in selling a wide array of products from books to shoes to novelty items.

Viacom had sought the help of the NBI-IPRD to probe the alleged rampant violation of its intellectual property rights, through the illegal and unauthorized use of its popular cartoon characters.

Armed with a search and seizure order issued by Judge Antonio M. Eugenio, Jr. of the Manila Regional Trial Court's Branch 24, the NBI team raided and seized from the head office of Art Cubes Inc. in San Juan, several sacks of documents allegedly detailing cake transactions, photographs, catalogs, pieces of cookies bearing the "Blues Clues" design.

Lawyer Eduardo C. Jimenez said Art Cubes was already given a prior written demand to cease and desist from using the characters "Blue."

But Art Cubes disregarded the demand and continued with its operations, prompting counsel for Viacom to request assistance from the NBI in investigating the matter. In particular, Viacom requested the NBI to investigate Art Cubes for allegedly using characters like Blue as designs on its cake products without

NickNATS characters

appropriate license in violation of Section 216 of Republic Act No. 8293 or the Intellectual Property Code of the Philippines.

Through a surveillance and test buy operation led by NBI agent Cle Stephen Hernandez, it was established via cake order forms, official receipts and photographs that Art Cubes' outlets in E. Rodriguez Jr., San Juan, Shangri-la Mall in Mandaluyong, Glorietta-Makati and SM City North Edsa were selling cakes bearing the Blue character design.

Based on the evidence presented by the NBI, Judge Eugenio said there was probable cause to believe that a violation of the IP Code is being committed so he ordered that cakes and pastries bearing the image of Blue, including cake molds, computers, receipts, tags, labels, boxes and other paraphernalia used by Art Cubes in producing products with the image of Blue be seized and placed under court custody.

Viacom also said the raid on Art Cubes was part of its continuing efforts to crack down on the illegal use and proliferation of counterfeit goods bearing its popular cartoon characters.

Insular extends ₱1B in loans

By Elena R. Tordjes

INSULAR Life recently extended a term loan worth P500 million to Manila Corp. and subscribed P500 million to International Container Terminal Services Inc. in line with its strategy to boost its fixed income fund portfolio.

In a statement, Mayor Dipatuan, Insular's chief investment officer, said that the loans allowed Insular Life to lock-in interest income at relatively competitive rates with long-term investments.

Both loans were intended to finance permanent working capital requirements and arranged by Insular Life subsidiary Insular Investment and Trust Corp.

Dipatuan said that given the nature of Insular Life's business requirements, there was a need to explore investment opportunities that would match its long-term obligations and at the same time meet its investment income targets.

The executive said that loans to companies like Ayala and ICTSI offer them some of the most stable sources of income that fit their long-term requirements.

Ayala is one of the country's largest conglomerates with market capitalization of P140 billion, and is diversified portfolio of business interests, including real estate, banking and telecommunications.

ICTSI has exclusive rights to manage and operate the Manila International Container Port and operates three other domestic ports, accounting for 60 percent of the country's containerized cargo volumes.

Shipbuilding industry . . .

Previous page A3

with an Australian buyer, is spending about $3 million to increase its capacity. company pres oval manager Jong Border told visiting journalists from Manila.

In 2002, PBMA Bohol-ed's revenues are expected to rise from only $5 million this year to about $22 million next year with the projected sale of two units, Alcuitz added.

PBMA Bohol-ed, which owns a 6.3-hectare shipyard in West Cebu Industrial Park, builds opposite high-speed vessels such as patrol boats and ferries that can travel at 30 knots each. While the new business is building new vessels, it also accepts repair, maintenance and conversion works.

Alcuitz said the company, which started building ships in 1997, had difficulty penetrating the global market at first but eventually caught the attention of firms from countries which offer cheaper labor such as China.

PBMA Bohol-ed's employs about 350 workers, of which 80 percent are Boholano craftsmen. It takes about 40 weeks to build each high-speed vessel.

On the other hand, THI builds cargo ships as big as an oil tanker. It produces a ship for export every 28 days and exports $65,870 million in business this year, Shoda said.

THI is set to invest about P170 million more to beef up its facility particularly to construct a covered shipway for building ships with a deadweight capacity of up to 50,000 tons, Alcuitz said. Its existing shipway allows the building of ships with a deadweight capacity of up to 32,000 tons.

"We have orders up to 2008. We have a huge export backlog," Alcuitz said.

Both of THI's local carriers, which is made of steel, is being sold for about $17 million. Since it started operations in 1996, THI has built about 30 oil tanker cargo ships for export.

In its video presentation, THI said Subic Bay was a natural hub for marine and heavy industry activities. It is the only industrial estate south of the country which produces 20,000 fresh graduates each year, in an ample supply of skilled manpower.

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Why not a 'tiangge' of art works?

CCP to hold special auction on Dec. 3

By Amado Ma. Guerrero
Contributor

A TURNTURN, art lovers, art collectors, or mere art buyers with an eye toward investment: Do you still need an Hernando R. Ocampo, an Arturo Luz, a José Joya or a Napoleon Abueva? A Bencab perhaps, or a multiple original by top printmakers Fil-de la Cruz and Imelda Cajipe Endaya?

The works of these and other prominent artists, representing two generations, are up for grabs at a special auction being underway in the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

The silent-bidding component of the auction was held Nov. 19-26. The works to be auctioned, including Cendikon pieces are part of the CCP collection, were previewed in the hallways (Padre Picarra-Matanzas) and Little Theater lobby until (Teatro Cadac Y Francisco). These were the first set of works.

The buyers wrote down their bids, which were subsequently sealed at the exhibit.

Things will come to a head with a live auction in the CCP Main Lobby on Dec. 3, 7:30 p.m. The auctioneer will be Roy Alvarado and Co. Lotus.

"During the live auction, the highest silent bid becomes the floor price," said Tet Gomez Hidalgo, director of CCP's Cultural Resource Department and Visual Arts & Museo Division, in an interview. "And if no one bids higher, the highest silent bidder wins."

The second set of artworks will then be auctioned. Selected works may be viewed online (www.culturalcenter.gov.ph).

Other artists

In addition to the four featured artists and the other artists mentioned, the works of the following will be on the auction block:

Augusto Albor, Bal Arnaiz, Virgilio Avila-do, Mideo Babaylan, Elmer Borlongan, Chabet to Abanga, Norberto Canseng, Alan Gaite, Ivi

MORE >>>

"BOAR'S Yuletide," by Roberto Feleo

"LIGHTNING Tagalog," by Fil-de la Cruz

ABSTRACT Expressionism by National Artist Hernando Ocampo

Rubio's Kayumanggi beauties, Veneracion's dark secrets

By Gian Domenado
Contributor

THE ART scene has witnessed recently the flowering of nostalgic tableaux in the past—people and houses and nearby artifacts of history have suddenly come alive in canvases.

This clearly reflects a deep-rooted infatuation with a time that seems irretrievably lost, a yearning for lost innocence, a flight of solace from the harsh realities of a world torn by bestiality and devastation.

In the work of Dominic Rubio, we find the mirror of history reflecting the image of the Filipino woman as seen in her day-to-day lives, through her apparel and accessories, and her very passionate affairs with the senses.

Titled "Kayumanggi," the artist's 40-piece collection of oil paintings (Galerie Angelo, until Dec. 12) resonates subtly the kind of romantic melancholy associated with faded photographs and oddities overlooked by time and in danger of being obliterated from memory.

Rubio has had two solo shows both on the subject of women, and Mother and Child, also in this exhibit, so has clearly come into his own, his brushwork solid and sensual, his artistic transformations so finely articulated in the figures and hues of his women as in the surrounding landscape.

Born in Sorsogon, Legazpi, Rubio took up Fine Arts at University of Santo Tomas, majoring in Commercial Art.

After working briefly for a realism-based advertising company for got a job as artist at the Dusit Thani in downtown Bangkok. He traveled around the Bangkok region in northern Mindanao and Lake Sebu, living among the Blaans and T'boli communities, as well as in Bicol and Baguio city. He later lived on the island of Corregidor and Bataan, interacting with the natives like Negritos.

The "kayumanggi" show evolved from Rubio's previous preoccupation with the image of the Hollywood vamp/sex goddess, as seen in his "Island Dreams/Oil" exhibition at Galerie Angelo a couple of years ago. Gone now are the soft-focus/sexy touches and highly-clothed/clad nudes.

There is now a sense of greater intimacy and graceful embrace/dance as he tries to recreate true to the spirit of the period. Inspired by his photographic research, "Bamboo Beds," "Philippine Love Affairs," Rubio attempts to capture the old fashioned decadence in the dainty portraits of women from different social classes, among the costumes and accessories of the drinky eyes opening through the half-opened capiz windows. The faces—and postures—reveal a multitude of emotions and specific in their simplicity.

Other pieces extol the industry and diligence of women as in "Dalayang ng Bikolnon," or others that evoke the company of other women as in "Hinti-hinti sa Bermuda."

Rubio has a simple painting of a family in a plantita mood, set against his trademark landscape of bamboos and cultivated trees.

Rubio's Blaan suite is markedly different in spirit. The artist literally goes to town by incorporating a liberal dose of fantasy in his creations, perhaps in bid to the multi-tribed mixture of his Filipinoness reflection.

The show accomplishes what it set out to do. There is nostalgic resonance in the artist (as in all of his quintessential chants of Filipino/Asian women) as his personal vision has been moulded by colonization, globalization and the exploitation of women.

"DABAE sa Dalaya," by Dominic Rubio

"SEAFOOD Romance," by Mikhail Veneracion

Art in his blood

An artist who paints in the manner of post-neo-expressionism is Mikhail Veneracion, son of surreal painter Jerry Veneracion. Not content to follow in artist-painter Dad's (a bit self-titled here tele-novela (Big Sky Mind, 1998 Dean Jason Rodriguez; Miss Manila) the young Veneracion shows a highly irreverent sensibility that combines elements of pop art, installation and political performance of representation.

In this show of the genres, The elements were haphazardly folded, cut and fronted on makeshift wood, their crayon drawing, and decorated objects like notes left dangling. While the medium is acrylic, Veneracion incorporates mixed media into the work.

In one piece, the image of a woman dominates, together with a portrait of Philip Philip V. The allusion, as gleaned from the title "All is Your Head," should be left to the viewer, with pictured texts explaining the ladies's paradise.

The largely cerebral attitude toward composition and pencil texts is permeated by the offshoot of the artist's view of modern existence as it unfolds in paradoxical, modernist and one-dimensional today's gallery circuit.

The anti-gallery stance has a redemptive value for young artists like Veneracion, who prefer to work outside the highly regimented system of producing decorative art. We can only hope the end-art stance will do the prevailing maverick much good in the future.

E-mail this author at gdomenado@yahoo.com

"LOVERS"

Abstract on a whim

By Ms. Jessica Jalandoni-Rabillos
Contributor

"PLAYGROUND No. 1"

CHRISTIAN Tanseco, who turned recently a 17 years-old, "Whimsy's Path," which brings out not just the art enthusiast in viewers but the lover-child in everyone as well.

With the use of acrylic and crayon, Tanseco's colors wrought with fine brushwork and only a touch abstraction, his color values that truly reflect his childhood.

Tanseco, 27, studied painting at De Philippine Women's University. He is a member of Anitrap-Artring, a group of artists formed by Cecile. He has won prizes in the Art Association of the Philippines and the FILO contests. His first solo exhibit was presented by The Greening Room last February.

Rachelle Fernandez says self-identification games are initiated by Tanseco along with spheres. Candice recalls in what source of the piece could, since looking like they can find a place in the memory.

Quite surprising, especially as abstract pieces are generally expected to be enigmatic, every mark, from the thick chat to the used spotlights in shapes that either enhance or downplay, the viewers are treated to become at ease.

"Bonding Heart" shows a girl's anticipation as she is about to receive a flower from a suitor, the light blue background implying that she is enveloped by her own reflection in the color. Some elements are almost recognizable. Along colorful guidelines by pink and yellow bodies like a toy in a colorful striped smoking, four dead in black are nudes, a charming portrayal of childhood.

The heart in bright yellow shows "Igtahon mahawa" depicts its supposed childhood pollution, fashioned by the magic of the same color that encloses it. Amazingly, a cartoon character about a cancer. A rabbit very much like Miffy is drawn in a blue mood.

The finishes to the last is "Flower," where he defies all, as once it is poised to bend for one. It is how a single blossom, in stem and leaves with stripes of green shades, white and black.

The boy seems what a purpose not just short, with a hand that mischievously looks like another interaction parody—a cutout like the dog in the pajamas for children's program, "Bear's Chest"). Maybe to say that he has been doggedly pursuing or actually experiencing, about cliche, puppy love?

Maternal memory

So the artist, the great bush ground not only represents fixation to an object from time or the object of his reflection. It is partly an homage to his mother who passed away when Tanseco was only three years old. But was her favorite colors and through the work. Christian's interest reflect her memory.

Apart from a penchant for bright colors, the artist prefers round to rectangle. In "Home," the gathering seems an afternoon scene of a variety of species in a park, Artist's prone to tradition, bringing to mind the crisp smell of grass during stillness by morning dew.

In his exhibition, Tanseco says this depicts a crucial scheme between real features are able to communicate.

In some works, the artist is manifest Cecile, which has an encouragement developed by proud recognition. The artist becomes with talents he says he wishes the Cecile of old his home remained shown his growing natural yearning for the public less days of childhood.

"Playground No. 1" and "Playground No. 2," are as their titles imply, scenes that imply trade and fun. "Tickle," the only work done on wood, includes a doodlebug as a companion; it refers to a favorite pastime.

"Blue Bird" simply refers to its boon, distant against its surroundings not unlike because of the color of its top, but also because it is home.

Along this line of sentiment is "Seven." Against exhibiting backdrop of blue, a lopsided tower of lavender and apple-green colors, different figures seeming on its corresponding. The impression is that of a tree devoid of leaves, with an unusual resting on each branch.

The artist embraces this in no pretentious, and coincides that the piece is, indeed, inspired by the comfort of taking a break with closest buddies. His particular painting is adorable in the sense that it would remind one of a child's bright days.

Compelling point to someone in a Tanseco-ing piece because he enjoys the process, which he has in love and innocent. He counts in very much the same way gleaning from his surroundings, assessment seeing in exact what he sees, inspire consciousness, and everything else less tells him piece.

That his abstract concept does result in animation, semi-abstract conditions are the relational years with adjectives.

On a whim, Tanseco is at times and restricts the views that shuts us at any and more easily to battling, but, as the contrast, thereby plot child like wonder and enjoyment.

Art that makes life bearable

By Constantino C. Tejero

THE STILL life can be compared to two other art forms. Like the music, it can be an exercise in concrete tonic points in technique, it develops with emphasizing tone, tone, hue, rhythm, mood.

Like the haiku, it records the transformation of life, the impermanence of relationships, the fragility of things, accordingly, reminds the beholder of his mortality.

Through the centuries this painting genre has been majorly dismissed as too prosy, too decorative, as not complex enough to be considered high art. Here among-heralded an opposite!

The still life can range from wood on its own artistic merit. It can stir the light or heavy emotional or prose, depending on how an artist uses it. It may be delicate but it can be menacing-haiku, indeed, like the master of the haiku for this genre.

A skillful as well as thought-ful use of this still life is displayed by Rona Barcarotta-Cruz in her eponymous exhibit, her first solo show, until Dec. 7 in The Crucible Gallery in the Ayala Ave., Bldg. A, 3F, Makati.

Here are 17 delectable pieces—20 in colored pencil on paper, 27 in watercolor on paper—depicting flowers and ornamental vases, glassware, fruit and shells, fruit and vegetables, and shells, laced with her charm and humor.

Rona is at her best when she is not trying to be serious, but engaged when she gets carried away by her own artistic whimsy.

Like in "Tuna in Bottles," "Tuna in Bangus," "Under a Kitsa," "Still Love Lilies," "Still Life" 1, "Fruits with Sun," "Fruits on Sand," "Shrimps," "Seafood with Veggies" 2, "Tilapia in Bahay."

The latter application is largely bold and confronted, in primary and secondary colors, yet Barcarotta-Cruz can be capable of subtle shading, as her pieces are to begin happy hues.

"I don't want to use black, so how be several," says the artist. "I want images and color to collaborate to look at works, naturalness in problems."

And it's not just still life she's capable of, either she has also done blanket and child, based on a beautiful relative and her grace, a wonderful subject for acrylic, but engaged when she got married.

"Method work must be big," she says. "Kailangan ng modeling space. When I started to study, lagi ng pagsipot. Sometimes I had to be my painting on bed."

An Assumption Convent alumna, from grade school through high school, she took up Fine Arts, major in Art Education, at College of the Holy Spirit. She belongs to the Tuesday group of artists, and members in her own art studio in Greenhills-southbound.

Among her favorite artists are Juan Mercenio, Anita Magsaysay-Ho, Rembrandt, Cezanne. She also loves graphic artist Eric Aduana-work she describes as "beautiful, realistic yet flowing daring."

The other artists/designs as a great influence but similar to Chinese painting, Hon Chuck, whose work has inspired the exquisite Orientalism in her own work.

"The purpose of my art is to make. One would a better place to live in," she says.

Rona's latest testament she puts to further positive by giving part of the proceeds of this exhibit to the Sindanan Theological Foundation, which helps in the education of deserving seminarians.

Some artists think art is for selfish reasons, while others use it to reveal, interpret to enlighten the world and the human condition. The loveliest artists is never. Even self-aggrandizement or delusion of its importance.

To make life bearable—isn't that a valid reason?

"ILUMANGO"

"YELLOW Lilies"

"MOTHER Earth," by Virgilio Arnado

Why not a 'tiangge' of art works?

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Arellano Cruz, Arnold Ilano, Antipol Urbanero, Rhoda Rizada, Rubio-Ildes, Kilpit Fernandez, Emmanuel Godino, Raul Isidro, Alfredo Lagoson, Ferdie Pineda, Ramon Orlina, Bernard Bocaling, Elmer Borlaz, Jaspy Pilapil, Susan V. Rosal, Lori Ilet, Arlene C. Bedolido, Ady Rivera Dimilo, Ador Alarcon, Roy Villanueva, Philip Victor, Ramon Orlina and Phillip Zialcita.

Yet, selected works from the artists," said Millabas. "The agreement is that 30 percent of the collected proceeds will go to the artist."

The objective of the auction is to raise funds for the CCF's vision programs. "We want to create and give our neighborhood program, which has been dormant for the past 25 years," Millabas noted.

The CCF collection, "which is strong on works from the 1980s to the 1990s. Just to be updated because the younger generation is not represented.

"If we don't have funds, we might not be able to purchase the best works, even at a discounted price," Millabas said. "We can't rely on donations from [the] collectors. Some collectors have [the] attitude [that] support by a great coffee for an overnight stay in Manila Philippine Plaza and one sculpture by Jaspy Pilapil.

Visualizing the Scriptures

By Constantine C. Tejero

THE ART of Ricardo Cruz Dorian harks back to Dalí, Klimt, Caravaggio, Mantegna, all the way to the Renaissance. In other words, it lacks decorum. In short, decadent.

Such a sensibility Dorian possesses that the casual gallery-goer is both repelled and attracted upon stumbling on his show "Biblikal," seven religious compositions lived on canvas, until today in The Big S Small Art Co. at the Artwalk, 4/L, Bldg. E, SM Megamall.

The exhibit, subtitled "Mahubingang Inglakihan" for "modern interpretation", displays religious art one can hardly call "pious." Rather, there are sensitive interpretations of religious themes.

Dorian' brand of surrealism infuses new blood into the ancient narratives, turning the familiar into something rich and strange.

His mother being a high-school literature teacher, he says he was as a child a lot of books just lying around in the house, such as illustrated tales of mythology from Greek to Norse. What fascinated him most, though, was the Bible, with the narratives illustrated by painings of Rubens, Michelangelo, Rembrandt, Dürer.

Those were his first inspirations when in Grade 4 he started drawing "mga kilos-kilos." This developed his passion to illustrate those biblical episodes.

"Pandaraj Hawakir" is his version of Paradise Lost, and here is presented an image more forceful than depicted by Masaccio in "The Expulsion from Paradise."

In fact, it looks horrifying—as the artist has found the Hell of Man with the Sword of the Angels, and Adam becomes Lucifer plunging into hellfire, the archangelic wings broken. The same finger that touched him with life is now an unwanted finger.

Sweaty sexuality

In "Judith," the Jewish woman is contemplating the body of the sleeping Assyrian general just before cutting off his head. Her face is shrouded with dark insinuations, and an unearthly light casts a horrific pallor on her body.

"Af Hakolungan si Eba"

Here, an unused tableau, but an ugly gash of red running on the wall could be a portent of the slaughter—or a metaphoric confusion of the roles, as Judith used sex in luring Holofernes to his doom.

The artist reveals he had been inspired by overtones of Klimt. Caravaggio and Roberto Gonzalez Fernandez for this one.

"Singhol ug Dardo" depicts the climb angel turned gazing at the body of a son of Egypt—one of the 10 plagues visited upon the land of the Pharaohs. Improbably, this image has a frankly homoerotic charactes. Frankly, we don't know where it came from. Caravaggio?

"Magdalena" carries on with the tradition of Mary of Magdala as a harlot, but the image is so thoroughly modernized the woman now looks like a Chloe queen on a tridpoint. Our identity wouldn't have been recognizable if not for the jar of scented oil in a niche, because even that most Christian emblem, the crucifix, also wears like one of Madonna's fashion accessories. The whole image is dripping with sweaty sensuality, overpowering even the Crucified Christ at the back.

"Samson" is straightforward enough in framing the tale of innocence in the face of hypocrisy and deceit, showing the eyes of the Hebrews' elders gleaming over the bathing beauty—so straightforward, in fact, that the back view of the naked maiden occupying half of the canvas seems to jump out.

"Ay Hakolungan si Eba" is a portrait of a lotus woman (Eve) surrounded by a male torso (Adam's ribs), a swallowed apple (the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil), and a subliminal image of a gravitating subspecies (the enemy of man). The images, composed of isolated images formally arranged, is a rather literal interpretation of the first chapter of the Genesis.

"JUDITH"

The human form

"Juan Bautista" depicts John the Baptist as a surreal hybrid: a woman's delicate face on a man's muscular body, with a cowl of animal skin for braid of hair. What's more something, the saint looks too naked, even for a male. (It must be the artist's frontal approach.)

Excluded from the exhibit is the last element—because it could some "too strong" for the casual gallery goer—is "Kalvario."

"PARAISONG Nawala"

It depicts the daughter of liberalism as a pure nurse: contemplating her prize after performing the Dance of the Seven Veils, wounds of Isaac becoming black rivulets of blood running down her body. The head of John the Baptist is thrown not on a silver platter but on a cooling surface of brilliant red.

The rampant nudity restricts even more. The artist admits he is, indeed, exploring this murky marriage of the erotic and the regic.

He points out those pieces are a celebration of the human form, something he is still exploring, which obviously he can't freely do if it were muddled in fabrics. He says he is at ease in composing both male and female bodies, though he finds the female anatomy a little harder to depict, particularly the proportion.

"Mas mahihirapan ako sa lighting," he laughs. "Dati, solid ang color ko, ilang flesh tones. Both tones. Pipipos, mag-iiba. Because I'm using more shadows, so I have to do more highlights."

All the images are framed by window-like structures that look like arches or hole rendered in straight lines. The artist says it's a design element he has taken from photographs he took or took during a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Strangely, this architectural detail lets the effort of putting those religious-cum-secular images look as the stalas of iconography.

"Balansing in many. I can have a center figure, but for the surrounding elements I compose an average of 10 characters," says the artist. "Ang pagdaan ng colors ang medyo mahirap."

The pieces takes 2-3 weeks to finish, and he works daily, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., seven days a week.

Rich colonization

He says he can't work with acrylic, as it dries too quick-drying for his compositions. "You can't blend it and it's hard to manipulate for my kind of work, which needs blending."

His art is drenched with Caravaggesc dramatic use of chiaroscuro, with an inordinate fondness for the golden glow ("Yeh...deep colors, with strongly accentuated shadows"); forceful pictorial vision; religious scenes suffused with a horrible sin; seeing old subjects in a new light.

"Mas maraming si Caravaggio or Dalí, as akin," he acknowledges. "Parang i'm eating leaves of Klimt. I really like his clashing brushstrokes, long pahiri sa linis."

Of Filipino artists, he acknowledges the influences of Botong Francisco, his mentor.

This may be his first solo exhibit, as he started late in painting full-time compared to his colleagues, but Dorian is not really new to the art scene. Educated to the foundations in grade school and high school and having studied painting in St. Scholastica's College, he has consistently won awards and citations in national art competitions since 1991.

He won the Juror's Choice (Male) in the Art Association of the Philippines Painting Competition, the Juror's Choice (Male) in the Philip Morris Philippine Art Awards, the Grand Prize (male) in the Lions y Pigeon Painting Competition. He has been a perennial finalist or honorable mention in the Shell, Metrobank, PLDT art competitions.

Obviously, the art world is just opening up for him.

"SALOME"

LIFESTYLE

"CYCLES"

An artist who runs in circles

By Lizy Ito
Contributor

AFTER 28 years in the US, artist Antonio Dacoy revisits the Philippine art scene via a fifth solo exhibition on Dec. 5 at Magnet Gallery in Makati. Titled "Glimpse of Faith," the show will feature Dacoy's abstractions done in two triptychs and a six-paneled work, all in acrylic on canvas.

The show attests to the evolution of the artist's style. Still practicing in the Philippines during the turbulent '70s, Dacoy quickly gained recognition for his cultivation of stabilized and intensely patterned surfaces. The artist narrates the personal propensity to celebrate the aesthetics of decorative and symbolic patterns, although this time using a vastly different visual approach.

In contrast to Dacoy's earlier years, where he alternately shifted from deriving forms from Oriental and Arab aesthetics, and venturing a return to geometric abstraction by using dots and lines to depict representational themes such as landscapes and still lifes, the artist now approaches the line between abstraction and representational work by returning to the uses of artistic elements.

"Personally my art has gone back to the basic forms of circles, squares and triangles. It has evolved from familiar objects like fruits, landscapes and still lifes where in the '70s, '80s and even the '90s were the roots," the artist says.

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"LOVE Says," by Fernando Sena

Austria at Finale, Llaguno-Ciani at Duemila

VISUAL ARTS

FINALE Art Gallery presents Antonio Austria's works on Dec. 3-14 at the Artwalk, 41_Magsaysay ft. Austria's themes are as perennial as ever: life and flies, gears, roosters, human figures—suppose had with a fresh sense that always delights. An avant-drawing artist and sculpting non-plus sophisticated leaders of diversity of Dante Torres, from the narrative of the boy in his teens

KASA ANGELES King Heritage Center presents 50 modern ceramic sculptures by six Filipinos dead and many are arts artists and 20s all ceramic-centric paintings by Jose Filipino murals and bird prints. The exhibit is ongoing until Dec. 3. The center is located at Arnis and Toledo Streets, Intramuros, Manila.

DALUNE Duemila showcases Lisa Llaguno-Ciani's "Strings and Things" on Dec. 3-11 at Megamall, Mandaluyong. The artist presents a series of silver canvas paintings that depict her personal selections of everyday objects.

THE PHILIPPINE Art Center's Art Gallery features Fernando Sena's "Toys" until Dec. 8 at Ilaw Avenue, UC.

THE DRAWING Room showcases Eduardo Castrillo's "Tanda" on Dec. 6-18 at Glenmore Building, 1301 Metropolitan Ave., Makati. The artist gauntlet-ographs the subject of various nudes, food and fruits of La Concha City, Negros Occidental.

ARELI Museum presents Melissa Francesca Buenaventura's "Kayaw" on Dec. 5-31 at the U.P. at Makati Circle Ex-Tempo Bldg., Ayala Avenue, Makati. The works have been inspired by a performance by the Bayanihan Philippine National Folk Dance Company and Fernando Alejandro's book, "Kayaw: Philippine Dances."

"ETELL Ida," by Antonio Austria

"PAMAK," by Nunelio Alvarado will be in "Bagong Ab-Black-Brown in Asia Exhibition" on Dec. 2-15 at SM Megamall A, Mandaluyong together with works by Nunelio Alvarado, Charlie Co and Dennis Awaten.

"HAIR King" by Jo Galbadon part of the exhibit "Kulay ng Panahon," a two-man show with Rodolf Gonzalez at the Galeria de las Islas, Globis Center, 144 Gen. Luna St., Intramuros, Manila. Call 5271113.

ARMANDO Ramos is holding his sixth solo at the Fontana Barocco, Fontana Leisure Parks, Clarkfield, Pampanga, until Dec. 31. The show presents Ramos' skills in landscape and figural renditions.

An artist who runs in circles

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Total non-representation

However, such a "celebration of process," before coming to stand a reflection of figurative themes, now borders toward total non-representation. Davoy now channels the energy of the free flowing and frenetic he has of the past life to form controlled and precise paintings.

In works such as "Me Myself and I" (2003) and "Complex" (2002), Davoy repeats the basic geometric elements such as dots and lines, and forms such as circles and squares, to create textured, layered and intricate yet orderly compositions.

His use of bold, bright colors persists, evidently. This time, however, these are juxtaposed or eclipse over one another to create the suggestion of banded transparencies and sheer, overlapping planes. The artist likewise infuses the logic of symbolism in his work.

"Circles would mean self-containment, spheres stability and triangles mobility," he says.

A graduate of University of the Philippines, Davoy also studied sculpture design at the Philadelphia College of Art Association. He has since then participated in numerous group shows and has held touring exhibitions throughout the United States and Germany with contemporaries Werner Vadeo, Norberto Gerding and Alfredo Lumapenet.

He has participated in several annual juried art exhibitions, the latest of which was the 29th National Juried Art Exhibition at the Ruphin Botanic Gallery, Camden County, New Jersey, this year. The artist currently works full-time in his studio in New Jersey, where he has been based since 1976.

"CITY Afloat"

Tony Davoy opens a homecoming show at Mag:net Gallery

"Glimpse of Faith" opens Dec. 5, 6 p.m., at the Mag:net Gallery Makati and runs until Dec. 27. Call 817-7005 or email magnet@info.com.ph

"BIRD in Flight"